

Ten Great Hot-Weather Stories in This Number.

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AUGUST
1909

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THE SMART SET



A
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AZINE
OF

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THE KNOT"—

A novel
of intense action
based on the
Divorce Question—
by

EMMA WOLF.

LONDON

Ess Ess Publishing Company, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York

PARIS

The **SMART SET** FOR *September*

"JOHN PAGET'S PROGRESS," a novel by W. H. G. Wyndham-Martyn, is issued complete in this number. One of the most interesting things this well-known novelist has ever written. Its dominant idea is that of the futility of caste distinction. The son of an earl, disgusted with certain phases of his life, discards his title and goes forth for a time to win his way on his own personality alone. The plot departs from the beaten path and leads on through a series of humorous incidents to some quite astounding exploits in which the hero, with the aid of an American adventurer, upsets the nice calculations of a reckless Wall Street despot. The heroine is an American girl of an especially likable type, and the contrast between her and other female characters in the story is very sharp. John Paget, himself, is a splendid fellow.

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"ROBINSON CRUSOE'S ISLE," by B. J. Daskham, has an alluring title, suggesting the open sea, a boat, fresh winds and all sorts of interesting adventures. The isle of the story is a delightful place and some exciting things happen there.

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ALLAN UPDEGRAFF'S "The Substitute" is full of a grim intensity; "L'Amour des Femmes," by J. C. Parks, is a tale of Paris and artists; "Just Pretending" is delightful with that glamor of sweet romance with which Mrs. Minnie Barbour Adams invests all her characters, whether they be princes and duchesses or barbers and boarding house waitresses.

OTHER FEATURES include exceptional stories by Henry Hull, Mrs. Luther Harris, a one-act play by George Middleton, and verse and sketches by Archibald Sullivan, Freeman Tilden and others.

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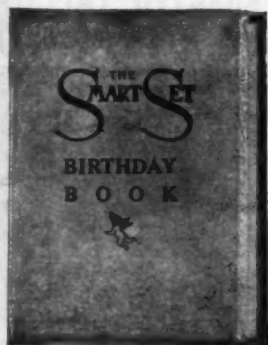
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Vol. XXVIII

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

No. 4

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THE KNOT

By EMMA WOLF

THE rain came down stilly, musically. On the wet asphalt serpentine threads of light from street lamps and windows wavered and fled in long, blurred, pointing fingers. The dripping, imperturbable houses stood grim in the drenching mystery of the night, their glooming flights of steps, some black and shadowy, some white and glimmering, seeming to wait like decoys to draw stealthy forms into the darksome, yawning entrances above.

The figure of a man came down the street, head sunk on breast, hands thrust into pockets, his step reluctant and slow as if held back by a brake. But John Heath was unconscious of his slowness, of the rain, of the shrouding gloom of the wet in which he moved. He was, in truth, at one with the spirit of the night, sunk into a slough of darkness which the monotonous drip-drip of the rain only deepened.

A still bewilderment possessed him, yet not so much a bewilderment as that sense of shock which succeeds bewilderment when full light finally comes. And this full, paralyzing light obsessed him so that he could see no further than the one illumined point.

Even at that moment when he had risen from his place at the dawdling end of dinner and Lucy looking up had questioned, "What is your hurry, John?" and he had answered, moving ever toward the door, "I have something to attend to"—it had obsessed him. And he had gone out and left them together.

And the rain took him.

Silvery musical, yet so still, it enveloped him, and he knew nothing,

felt nothing of it. Only that one point of light illuminating the unmistakable handwriting on the wall:

"They love each other!"

Thus, guidon-led, John Heath moved on.

They loved each other! A word—was it a word?—a look—no, no! The unconscious intonation, that inadvertent little betrayal which had touched the button and turned on the merciless glare!

It was so pitilessly natural—that they should love each other: the man, Will Fleming, with his persuasive attractions, thrown into intimate association with Lucy Heath. To think her name was to think beauty. To think Will Fleming was to think—what? Shelley—genius, erratic yet irresistible.

Not that John Heath thought Shelley. He knew nothing of Shelley, but his seething mind projected just such an image, though unlabeled. How long? Back as far as those days in the Pitti when he first appeared to them, like a fallen angel in his brightness, to play *cicerone* out of the joy of his soul for the benefit of his awkward countryman and his young wife with the beautiful, sensitive face. He remembered now that night when she had turned to him in the privacy of their hotel, her face aglow with undefined rapture: "What a day we have had, John!"

And the other days in the enchantments of Venice when he, John, had exulted in his power, financial purely, to give her this joy which seemed to make her glorious beyond the bounds of dreams. Will Fleming had been with them.

And then, his sudden bursting upon

them, two months after their return home.

"These are your headquarters," John Heath had decreed laconically in innocent hospitality. He had seemed so like a waif, and John knew that Lucy had found in him something he, John, could never supply.

And so Will Fleming, lightly acquiescent, had come and gone at will unceremoniously, almost as one of the family. He had become that nondescript, insouciant, taken-for-granted factor in John Heath's simple faith, "the friend of the family." Thus they had accepted him as settled down to complete his drama in this far-away, gray old city by the western sea.

Drama! The climax had been unfolded unpremeditatedly to John Heath that night.

Wireless messages there had been in plenty before, but he had not been equipped to receive them. Now it all stood revealed, the cause of his unaccountable sense of loneliness, of her magnified gentleness and solicitude, of her flashes of dazzling gaiety, of her unprecedented silences and withdrawals.

They loved each other. Great, lumbering John Heath, approaching his home, moved on, homeless, adrift. She had never been his—never. He realized now that the jewel had never been given into his keeping—only the case. The treasure had been reserved for Will Fleming.

Rightly—oh, rightly, of course!

Under the lash of fate he had become self-conscious. Like a dog in the night, house dog, in truth, without the portal, he reached his own domain.

Something creaked in the lisping stillness. He saw that an iron gate toward the back of the garden gaped wide. Without volition, dully instinctive, he turned from the front steps and went down the side path leading toward the back. Under his hand the gate caught the hasp softly. But, as he turned about to retrace his steps, a sudden flood of light fell on the wet pavement directly in front of the house and stayed him.

He knew at once that the front door had been opened.

Will Fleming was leaving.

The husband would wait here in the shadow until the lover had gone.

But there came no sound from the deep entrance just around the wall against which he leaned.

A clammy wave covered him, left him breathless, motionless as the dead. Why did they not speak? What was happening there in the soft glow from the hall where he could not see?

A step struck sharp on the marble of the vestibule—another—then her voice:

"Wait."

"What for?"

"A word."

"You bade me speak no word."

"I mean—good night."

"Better good-bye."

"Yes. Better good-bye."

"Good-bye."

His step was upon the stair. He heard her voice again: "Wait."

"You wish to prolong the agony?"

"Make it good night."

His step crisped backward on the vestibule marble.

"How long do you expect this to last?"

"Forever."

"Oh, you good women—you good women!"

"Would you have me less—good?"

"No."

"What then? Help me."

"Admit that you love me."

Their low, intense, painful voices ceased. There was no answer.

Then the man spoke, exultant: "You raise your face—you announce it."

"I—denounce it."

"Lucy—beloved!"

"Hush. Stand back. I have said nothing—nothing. But I have said too much. Good night."

"Lucy, my poor unhappy one, there is a way. Listen!"

"Stand farther back. I am listening."

"Do you remember Ruskin?"

"Ruskin?"

"When Millais came?"

"Don't—I implore you."

"He was a good man. John Heath is a good man."

"I don't understand you."

"We will go to him, simply, truthfully, unafraid. We will say to him, 'We love each other. Out of your great love will you not remove the bond?'"

"Will, Will, this is not a play! Come down to reality. And—may God forgive me!"

"What is there to forgive?"

"This. Enough."

"What shall I say—what can I do?"

"Nothing. Leave me to my sorrow."

"And me?"

"Forever and ever, amen."

"Lucy, this is madness! Think, count—it is two to one!"

"Two against one. We two against him. Once I made a vow to this 'one'; it ended: 'Until death us shall part.' Good night."

"Oh, you, my poor lost love—good night."

His light foot touched the steps lingeringly; his tall, slight figure passed swiftly aslant the street and out of sight.

The flood of light faded from the wet pavement in front of the house.

The rain came down, silvery musical.

II

"JOHN, come over here and take the popper." Her tone was gaily peremptory.

"Let me, Mrs. Heath."

"No, this sport is too rustic for you. John and I were raised on open fire-places and corn popping and—spelling matches. John Heath, come out of that dark corner this instant, sir, and spell 'Ordnance'."

"Oh, shucks!"

"Not a bit of it, shucks. Come to the fire and tell Mr. Fleming that story."

"Nonsense."

"Won't you come, John?" The lightness had vanished from her tone; a suspicion of tears was in her eager pleading.

"I prefer it here."

In all his life John Heath had never pretended. He had no social pliancy. He stuck to his shadowy corner.

In the flickering firelight Fleming saw her fine hand tremble through the unpopped yellow corn she was tentatively transferring to the popper. He forbore to look at her face. His own, sharp, clear cut as a cameo, reflected a strong nervous strain.

"Let me have that long-handled thing, if you are tired," he said quickly, stretching forth his hand. "It's mere child's play, anyway. A little higher? There! No, it's burning. What's wrong?"

"Shake it. Slowly, gently—that's right. Steadily. I'll lower the log a bit." She knelt on the rug, poking at the dull glowing wood; the warm, crisp fragrance of the corn, bursting snow white in the wire cage, filled the room. Above her, bending forward in his low armchair, Will Fleming manipulated the toylike utensil. The firelight glowed ruby red upon the dead gold of her hair and her white gown. It looked "mere child's play." John Heath, holding before him a newspaper which he could not decipher in the gloom, saw the play without looking.

"What's the 'ordnance' story?" suggested Fleming, his eyes fastened upon the swelling snow in the popper.

Lucy, guarding the fire, still knelt on the rug, forgetful of her position, absently thrusting the poker in and out of the rosy embers.

"It's— You tell it, John."

"There's nothing to tell."

"Why, John Heath!" Her full contralto voice suddenly fluted high. She began with a little laugh. "It's the story of a sacrifice. Do you like stories of sacrifices?"

"Hate them. False economy. But go on."

"It happened when I was at school in Ventura—before I went East to get finished off. We had spelling matches in Ventura in those days, the days when the simple life seemed as good as—molasses candy. I blush to say that, when I was fifteen years old, I was the boss of the school—boys and girls all

counted. And my daddy was proud of me, and I was proud of Judge Wallace's pride. Abominably proud, I was. I don't think I ever strutted, but I'm afraid I crowed—on the quiet. And John Heath knew it. He isn't in the story yet, but you'll see where he, with his knowledge, comes in. This is the story of a hero, I'd have you know—but that is anticipating.

"Well, one day it was decided that, to help swell the fund for a new school organ, there should be a spelling match, the participants to be the young fashionables of the town pitted sex against sex. Now, though I was ineligible, being only fifteen and still a schoolgirl, I was, as I was modestly telling you, considered the pride of the school and Judge Wallace's daughter. The fame of *me* would not down, and I was invited to take part. Ooh! Stop—it's full! Turn it into the dish. Doesn't it smell delicious? There—I'll salt it and pass it." She scrambled to her feet and took the bowl from him.

"Hold your paper, John." She had crossed to him directly. "Scoop it—make a hollow to hold the popcorn. Yes, you know you love it. Oh, hold it up; it's rolling on the floor."

John tilted the paper sideways to catch the corn dropping like snow upon the dull rose of the carpet.

Lucy, undaunted in her strained mood, went back to offer the confection to Fleming, then, forgetful, overwrought, she stood like a vestal virgin, holding out the bowl, white-robed, slender and beautiful, her velvety, gold brown eyes aglow in the firelight. The man nearer her looked up at her, an uneasy flush on his fine face, while the man beyond fought out the groan in his soul.

"And so," she continued in a sort of chanting abstraction, "we all got new dresses and went to show off. What did I wear, John?"

He cleared his throat of its stricture. "White," he responded briefly.

"Of course. I was only a little girl. Was I *very* little, John?"

"No—tall."

She laughed gleefully. She had

made him talk. "But I was the youngest, and whenever my turn came Mr. Greer said, 'Now, Little Lucy, spell "Cat"—or "Rat" or "Idiosyncrasy." Remember, John?"'

"Perfectly."

"What was the color of my sash, sir?"

"Blue."

"Right again. And the ribbon in my hair?"

"Blue, too."

"Good. And my hair—how was that?"

"Straight back in two tails to the bottom of your dress."

"Yes, but my dress was short then; it's only fair to say my dress was short."

Fleming smiled over her excited absurdity.

After a pensive moment she continued.

"Now I must tell about John. John Heath, you may know, is a born speller. Everybody in Ventura knew about him; in his schooldays, and after, he had always outspelled anyone who dared to stand up against him. So it was a foregone conclusion that the fight was on between John Heath and Lucy Wallace. And—and—tell it not in Gath!—there was betting over the issue going on in Bob Baker's store. Well, the great night came and, the captains having been previously elected, the choosing of sides went merrily on. It goes without saying that John Heath was the first name called and Lucy Wallace the second. And presently there were drawn up two formidable army lines in battle array. Words were flung out, flung back, tossed to and fro, some of the combatants standing firm, some going down thick and fast like tin soldiers in a toy battle. And finally there remained but John and Lucy—John, aged twenty-four, looking across at Lucy, aged fifteen. Some of the spectators were sorry for 'Little Lucy.'"

Her plaintive coquetry was irresistible. Again Fleming laughed softly, forgetful of everything but the charm of the speaker, and even John Heath's grim taciturnity was broken by the significant rustling of his lowered paper.

Mechanically she placed her bowl of popcorn on the table, let her arms fall at her sides, stood straight and lithe, as at attention.

"'Naow,' she called in an imitative nasal recital, 'John Heath, spell "Ord-nance." "Ord-nance," John—weapons of warfare! Just take it easy, John—go slow.'"

There was a pause in the recital. Then Lucy interpolated in lowered natural accents: "I desire to explain that, unbeknown to all but the protagonists, in this crucial moment of suspense there had taken place a singular passage at arms between those two—merely a volley and return of glances; Lucy's bright, eager, *knowing*; John's upraised to her for a moment, then lowered. On with the match!" She resumed nasal command.

"'That's right, John; take your time—take your time.'"

"'A-u-d, aud, n-a-n-c-e, nance, aud-nance.'"

Again a pregnant pause ensued.

Then, in slow, nasal sorrow: "'Little Lucy, can *you* spell "Ord-nance"?"

"'O-r-d, n-a-n-c-e, ord-nance.'"

There was deafening applause, amid which came one running with the prize—a copy of Longfellow's poems bound in green cloth, gilt-edged, held high—and shouting: 'The prize is yours, Lucy Wallace. We're proud to award it to you. Take it with the congratulations of all here assembled.' But, to the consternation of all assembled, Lucy Wallace lit out with a tight little fist, hit the poor, innocent book a furious blow and, with tears streaming down her face, sobbed out: 'I don't want your old book! Take it away! John Heath knew how to spell it—John Heath knew how.'"

An abortive sound akin to a chuckle came from the depths of the shadows.

"And—" prompted Fleming.

"Nothing would induce her to take it."

"Not afterward?"

"Never."

"And what did John Heath say?"

"He said, 'Oh, shucks!'"

Fleming laughed aloud. "A tale of male folly and female hysteria, which is a distinction without a difference. But what did I tell you? False economy."

"Oh, economy! Who is talking economy? It's a story, sir, a beautiful story of— Where are you going, John?"

"I'll be back in a minute."

The curtain fell behind him. He mounted the broad stairway three steps at a time.

Through a slightly opened door a faint glow streamed. He entered softly. The dim night light discovered a tiny figure sitting bolt upright and still in the little bed, the tousled golden head refulgent even in the shadows.

"Did you call, Jack?" John asked gently.

A patient little sob responded. "I didn't call loud—I only said it."

"What did you say, Jack?"

"I said 'Muddie'—just like that. I didn't say 'Daddie' at all. I don't want my daddie; I want my muddie."

"Won't daddie do? Muddie's busy—"

"Please go 'way, daddie. Go 'way! I want my muddie to give me a drink of water—I don't want Mollie or you, I tell you! Go 'way, daddie—go far, far 'way! I want my own, own—"

"All right, boy; stop crying. I'll send your mother." He spoke so harshly that the child's soft, incessant sobbing was arrested as the father turned sharply and left the room.

"Jack wants you," he announced curtly on reëntering the library.

"Jack! Why, where's Mollie? I didn't hear—" But she was gone while she spoke.

Fleming was standing. "I was just going, Heath. There's some sort of reception on at the club and I promised Merritt to be on hand. How about those bonds? Do you still advise buying?"

"They're all right."

"Then will you get twenty-five for me—tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"Make a note of it, will you? The lamp is low—I'll turn on the lights—"

"No, don't. I'll remember."

"Thanks. Well, I'm off. Good night."

He left unceremoniously.

Heath, standing agaze before the ruddy embers, heard the front door close behind him. In wide abstraction he seated himself in the broad, low arm-chair drawn close to the fire. A dogged, puerile bitterness had wiped out all other thought, sucking out his manhood's reason.

It was merely the traditional power of the last straw at work. The child didn't want him, truly had no use for him.

The little, childish voice piped it:

"I don't want you—I want my mud-die." Reiteration upon reiteration, and the wailing echo, "Go 'way, daddie—go far away!"

The man heard spellbound, as if the little voice were pronouncing sentence.

"Oh, God!" his agonized soul pleaded, but his lips were dumb.

Gradually he had huddled down in his chair, his gaze fixed on the fading fireglow. Gradually the echo died away and he was staring blankly into the rosy depths of the crumbling wood—the twilight of the fire god. No sound, no motion reached him—he was remote from life.

But presently a figure seemed to mount and fade, mount and fade, over and down the broken heights and roads and caverns of infinitesimally small, dull red ruins wrought by the cunning Loki.

Lucy.

And again Lucy.

And Lucy evermore.

Lucy—and summer dusk in the Southern country town. Men tilting back in chairs on the post office veranda, speaking and laughing fitfully. And then the Figure passing like fleet music down the waning light.

"Look at Farley!" laughs a voice.

Farley, there, in the middle of the road, absorbed, hat in hand.

"Bewitched," laughs another voice.

"Well, it's Lucy Wallace. Small wonder."

"The poor boy looks like a sheep. Hallo! He's shuffling back to his senses. Good for the town's wits she's only here in summer!"

"She's beautiful and no mistake."

"Not beautiful, but—"

"Yes, what?"

"I don't know—something—"

"Lovely."

"What's the difference?"

"Hanged if I know."

Somebody unconsciously, softly, whistles "Annie Laurie." A man in the background rises and moves away.

"Night, John."

"Night."

In a wide, desolate room, the Figure was shadowed in black, the young, white face raised to his.

"I sent for you, Mr. Heath, because my father trusted you so. In all this community where he lived—and loved—so long, yours—'My dear Tom Heath's son,' as he always spoke of you—is the only name that comes to me in my extremity."

The gold brown, velvety eyes fill as they plead up to the inarticulate hulk of humanity before her, but a quivering smile crosses her sensitive mouth.

"He said, 'John Heath is good for what ails you.'"

John Heath's grin dies abortively at the break in her voice as she continues.

"So I thought of you when—when I found out. It's more—more than ten thousand dollars, and the house is mortgaged to its full value. I must pay it all back, Mr. Heath."

"How?"

"I could teach. You are a school trustee, aren't you?"

"Yes. You would have to pass examinations."

"I could—would pass them."

"You couldn't do it."

"Spell 'Ordinance,' Mr. Heath!"

"Oh, my poor darling!" his heart yearns, but his words are, "I was thinking of the—the debts. It would take your lifetime."

"I am only twenty-one—and strong."

"It would kill you."

"Oh, no. Will you help me, Mr. Heath?"

"I—I—"

"Yes?"

"I—I have thousands of dollars for which I have no use. I am a rich man, Miss Wallace."

"Don't be purse proud, Mr. Heath."

"It's nothing to me—unless it can help you."

"How could it help me?"

"Any way. Take it—it's nothing to me."

"Do you mean—you would be my creditor, instead of the others?"

"I mean nothing of the sort. I mean it is yours."

"Surely you do not mean to insult me!"

"Lucy, Lucy!"

Just his one irresistible cry—and the world never to be the same again for either of them. When the mists clear a strange, sweet gentleness is shining out upon him, though her face is burning with surprised color.

"I didn't mean to—to frighten you. Shall I go away?"

"No, no."

"I only wanted to say that—that my—everything I have is yours. Forgive me. I couldn't help it. Good-bye."

"But you have not answered me. It is a question of dire necessity—of business, you know."

"Then let it be a business question to you. Could you—I am not asking you to—to care for me—could you—marry me?"

Was it ages after—the response, with both hands outheld to draw or to repel? "I know—I could care for you, but—under the circumstances—I could never—never—marry you."

"There are no circumstances," says John Heath madly.

Even now he could not recall the delirium following; only her thoughtful face, like a grave star, shining up at him.

Another room, dim and unfamiliar, and the Figure, white-robed, standing before him.

"And I want you to know on this, our wedding night, that it is our wedding night, in truth. That while life lasts I dedicate myself to you; that I am *gladly* yours, wholly and utterly yours, and that I shall be a true wife to you, dear, until death us shall part."

Again he sees the beautiful outheld hands; again he encircles the slender wrists with gentle but iron fingers like manacles, and draws her closer, closer until he possesses her . . .

The withering log fell in crunching fragments down to the bricks. The embers were ashes; the lamp had long since spluttered out. Silence and death held the room.

But persistently the silence echoes.

To the silvery lisp of incessant rain, her low voice sings like a chant—in-tense, final:

"Once—I made a vow—to this good man. It ended: 'Until death us shall part.'"

Final. She had sentenced herself; imprisonment for life. And he—the keeper of the key.

Final. He, ordained to bar her from happiness—her happiness. "Forever and ever, amen."

And the Thing John Heath had been looking at, unseeing, for two whole days—ever since that moment of death in the rain—came close and looked him in the face.

He saw. Huddled and still he sat staring at it.

But a voice, warm and alive, scattered the brooding silence.

"Why are you sitting in the dark and cold, John? Aren't you going to bed?"

"Presently." His voice sounded cavernous and distant.

The slight, ghostly figure hesitated, then glided swiftly to his side. She bent, putting her hand upon his, her long braided hair falling across his knee like a silken rope.

"You are cold—icy. Come, John. It is very late. Please, come."

"Yes. Presently."

His tone dismissed her.

She straightened, but her hand lin-

gered on the arm of his chair. He felt her touch his sleeve.

"I wish you would come, John," she whispered, her voice catching piteously.

"Presently, I said."

She turned gropingly and left him.

He tasted the very dregs of bitterness in the understanding of her solicitude, her final unquestioning going. But she was "a true wife" to him.

He shivered violently.

Toward morning he staggered to his feet, stiff and gaunt.

III

A TENTATIVE knock at the door startled Lucy from the window. It was one of the maids, who put in a deprecatory head without entering.

"It's Kate wants to know will Mr. Heath be home for dinner tonight ma'am."

"I—I'm not sure. I think so. And—Maggie!"

"Yes, 'm?"

"Didn't I hear the telephone ring a few minutes ago?"

"No, 'm. Leastways, none of us heard it."

"Then I suppose it was imagination. Are you quite sure the postman didn't leave anything?"

"Nothing in the box. We didn't see anything, ma'am."

"Did you look?"

"Sure I did."

"Thank you. And, oh, Maggie!"

"Yes, 'm?"

"I thought— Who rang the door bell a while ago?"

"That was Miss Borden, ma'am. I brought you her card."

"Of course—I know that. I mean about a half-hour ago."

"Oh! That was only a peddler, ma'am."

"It seemed late for a peddler. But— Tell Mollie I want Jack now."

The child came with a whoop and a bound, flinging himself upon her, climbing agilely, with gurgles of triumph, to

her shoulder, despite her restraining arms.

"Don't, Jack; you hurt mother. Come down, darling—"

"You're not high like my daddie. My daddie lets me sit on his head. I'm going—"

"Come down, you monkey!" She seated herself at the window, swinging him from his perch to her lap. "Let's watch for the lampie."

"No, let's play, 'Sister Anne, Sister Anne, go to de window an' see if you see anybody comin'."

"Yes. I'll be Sister Anne."

"No, you'll be de wife what opened de door, and de key—"

"Jack, what are you doing to my hair, you naughty boy?"

He shrieked in impish enjoyment, throwing the pins to a distant corner as she hastily put him down and went to the mirror to undo the havoc his mischief had wrought. He watched her ecstatically from the arm of the chair, a tiny figure of picturesque beauty in the fading light.

"Is Mr. F'eming coming?"

"I don't know."

"Don't you like Mr. F'eming?"

"Oh, yes."

"Why did you scold him, then?"

"When did I scold him?"

"Now, you did, muddie. I heard you. An' you made a face like your soup was peppery. I like Mr. F'eming."

"Do you?"

"Yep. He kin tell a story, he kin. My daddie can't. He's no good."

"Jack!"

"I only said my daddie's no good for stories, muddie. An' he isn't. But he's good to climb on; he's—"

"Sister Anne, Sister Anne, go to the window and see if you see anyone coming."

"Only de lampie lightin' de lamps. Is it night, muddie?"

"Nearly, Jack."

"Den where's my daddie? He wasn't here for brekfus, too, 'n I want him to come now."

"He's coming, love. Let's—you and me—wish he was here, three times, out

loud, and maybe the fairies will send him."

Three times her trembling contralto, enforced by the child's treble, droned out the wish.

But the "fairies" paid no heed.

Night came, and Lucy Heath went down and stared through the courses of her solitary dinner.

When she repaired to the library a burning fever parched her lips; her cheeks and eyes were blazing, her hands icy. One moment she sat motionless, in an intent, listening attitude; the next she was on her feet, taking a few aimless steps forward.

A sudden ringing of the door bell drew her up rigid. A moment later Fleming stood in the doorway, hat in hand, his open overcoat revealing full evening dress.

"Well," he ejaculated in surprise, "aren't you going?"

The blaze had receded from her face, leaving her ghastly. "Going?" she repeated dazedly.

"To Miss Grant's wedding. It's to-night, you know." He had taken a step into the room and stood regarding her curiously.

"Is it? No, I'm not going."

"But—Heath—" He looked about him, wondering.

"No. John's not going either."

"Anything wrong? Jack—"

"Nothing is wrong. But we—we just don't care about going." She smiled a hard, brilliant smile across at him, an inscrutable, excluding smile, and the flaming blood burned her cheeks again.

Fleming's sensitive face responded in kind. "I'm sorry," he murmured quickly. "Then I'd better go. It must be time."

"Yes."

"Good night."

"Good night."

He shifted his hat to his other hand, making a movement toward her, but she stood stonily ignoring, and with a muttered farewell he turned away.

Several nights later, at about dusk, he appeared again. There were no lights in her little upstairs sitting room whither he had been directed.

"I've come for dinner," he announced lightly, moving toward the silent figure seated near the window. She did not stir, and he sank into the chair before her without disturbing her mood. He had often weathered her moods.

A few minutes later he remarked casually: "I went to see John today, but his office was closed. Where is he?"

A strangled word escaped her.

Startled, he clutched the arms of his chair, leaning toward her, striving to search her averted face in the dim light.

"Lucy," he said in steady self-control, "has anything happened?"

To his amazement she began to speak in a voice shockingly changed from its natural bright warmth to a dull, fixed monotone.

"We've searched the hospitals and he isn't there. We've searched the docks and he isn't there. We've searched the morgue and he isn't there. We've searched all along the coast—and the railroad offices—and the steamship offices—and he hasn't been there. He isn't anywhere at all."

Fleming, ashen to the lips, sat leaning toward her, uncomprehending. "I don't think I understand you," he managed to say. "Don't you know where Heath is? I don't understand you."

"No. Nobody understands. Nobody understands."

He saw that she was dazed and impulsively he leaned closer, his hand reaching for hers.

"Don't touch me!" she cried violently, drawing from him, and he sprang up, standing straight and mute.

"You don't understand? You?" she hurled accusingly, stinging, her white face raised and gleaming through the dimness.

"Pardon me, no." He spoke in haughty gentleness.

"I understand."

"Ah!"

"And so do you. And you must never come here again. Never! At least you understand that."

"The words—not their provocation."

"Ha!"

He gripped the back of the chair against which he stood. "It—I wish to understand, please. Won't you try to make it clear to me? Wait a minute and then try to tell me, consecutively, what has happened." His quiet firmness checked her madness for a space.

She groped for a clearing, trembling in the sudden reaction. "Do you remember that night we popped corn and I told you about the spelling match?" she whispered huskily.

"Perfectly," he assured her in gentle distinctness.

"Well, it wasn't that night."

"No?"

"It was long before—two nights before—that night it rained. Do you remember?"

"Yes."

"No, no. I don't mean you or me. I mean that that night—something happened at dinner—or before—that made John—see."

"Will you speak openly? I don't want to guess at your meaning."

She gathered herself together with a hard drawn breath and made a supreme effort. "John found out—what came to the surface later—on the steps."

"Ah! Yes. And he—spoke of it?"

She made answer in the same low, choking staccato. "John never speaks—the things that are closest to his heart. He can't."

"That is—tragic."

"Instead, he acts. In the seven years—that we have been married—I have taught myself to interpret—his silences."

"Yes. But now what have you discovered? Not psychologically, please—what facts?" He suppressed her emotion with intention, and again she strove to speak objectively.

"Ferrier, my lawyer, and the detective have discovered that he took two suit cases with clothes—and some securities or valuables—we don't know what—from his vault in the bank."

"Then there was deliberate plan. Did he leave any word with anybody? His office boy, say, or—anybody?"

"Not a sign. He just slipped silently away—without troubling anyone."

"And was there—any provision made for you and Jack?"

"There always has been. He had settled a generous independent income on me at the time of our marriage. There was nothing to deter." She stared fixedly ahead, concluding in biting despair: "He thought it all out by himself and decided that he was—*de trop*."

He could make no response.

"God knows what horrors he thought." The words were so unexpected that Fleming began to fear for her reason.

"Stop right there," he commanded sternly. "You are hysterical. You know he could think no horrors of you. Where is your good sense?"

"Oh, what can you know?"

"I know Heath, and I know you. You are morbidly conscience stricken. You are all wrong in your interpretation—it is not at all as you think. I see what his going means."

She nervously smoothed back the hair from her temples, looking up at him in submissive surprise. "Then tell me, please," she said wearily.

But Fleming bowed his face to his hands, still gripping the high back of the chair, before answering. When he raised his head and spoke through the dark, it was quite selflessly.

"It is not for me to say—now. But John Heath was a strong-hearted man with but one object in life—your happiness. He could not stand between it and you. Trust me, he chose the only sane way—the only way endurable to himself."

"You think he may come back—soon?" Somehow he had given her peace, and she looked up at him, the prime cause of it all, with the trusting simplicity of a wearied child.

Her innocent question gave Fleming a swift recoil. He had been beset throughout the interview by a wild desire to take her in his arms, to soothe her tortured conscience, to make her feel the strange, beautiful meaning of Heath's peculiar action. Before her

remarkable simplicity he felt himself removed, standing chill and alone beyond the circle of her thought's reach.

"Perhaps," he answered mechanically.

"Then I can wait. Thank you. You have done me so much good." She rose resolutely. "Will you turn on the lights? It has grown quite dark."

The flood of light revealed two wan countenances, and as Lucy Heath's gaze fell upon him her haggard face flamed wretchedly and her eyes fell. She stood quite still before him with drooping head, and Fleming waited for that which was visibly battling to her lips.

"You must realize," she said at last with sad dignity, "that it is impossible for me—that you must not come here."

He neither spoke nor moved.

"This is painful for me—terribly painful," she articulated with difficulty, her eyes still straining to the carpet. "Won't you help me, please?"

Still her eyes strained downward. When, a moment later, she raised them, blank and miserable, she was quite alone.

IV

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

DEAR MR. FLEMING:

I want to thank you for the season tickets for the concerts which you so kindly sent. As I cannot use them, I am returning them to you herewith, hoping you can pass them on to someone who may make use of them. I also wish to thank you for the "Francesca" which you sent several weeks ago. I read very little now. I hope you are well and happy.

LUCY HEATH.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

DEAR MRS. HEATH:

I hope you are well—and not unhappy. Your note tortures me. Is it yourself—or my sending the book—or my just meed of censure for the past? Whatever it is, I pray for your forgive-

ness and your happiness. But I could not stand the blank silence.

WILLIAM FLEMING.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

DEAR MR. FLEMING:

In answer to your note: Three months have passed since last we spoke together. In these quiet days, and particularly since receiving your note, it has been borne in upon me that in my then confused state I failed to thank you for your patience with me; that I may have spoken needlessly cruel or severe words to you. I do not know just what was said or left unsaid, but if I seemed merciless or selfish, if now my silence has seemed puerile or unnecessary, will you not try to understand and forgive me? A word of reassurance from you would be gladly received.

Very sincerely yours,

LUCY HEATH.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

DEAR MRS. HEATH:

You have always spoken and acted with that sweet nobility of which you are the womanly expression. There could be nothing to forgive. My only and endless regret is that my coming into your life should have caused you this supreme sorrow. I wait here at hand ready to give you any service in my power. And I am always,

Faithfully yours,

WILLIAM FLEMING.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

DEAR MR. FLEMING:

I have been thinking over your kind letter received several weeks ago. Why should I not answer it? I must speak plainly to you. You must never blame yourself. The fault was mine. It is always the woman's fault—when she has reached the years and knowledge and experience that I had reached. I should have bade you go long before—in the beginning. The kindest thing my supreme judge—my own conscience—can call it is "weakness." And

THE SMART SET

there should be no room for such quibbling in the mental Penal Code of a woman married to a good man who loves her.

You have never heard of mental flagellations, have you? There is no knouting like unto it known to barbarism or asceticism. I court it. Still, one moves and lives—above one's Self—according to the rut into which one has been set. My little world thinks my husband is away upon some business enterprise. At least, such is the attitude observed toward me.

We have found no trace of his whereabouts, and the search goes on indefinitely.

I hope you can decipher this indistinct scrawl—my eyes trouble me considerably—but, at any rate, you will understand from it that I hold you blameless.

LUCY HEATH.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH.

DEAR (—forgive me!)

I cannot tear myself from your letter. I read and reread it with my eyes closed. This cannot go on; by this, I mean your mental condition. I am here to stop it. Listen, for you *must* listen to me.

Out of the cataclysm can you not rise long enough to realize that that which caused it was beautiful in itself—my love, your love, his love and self-abnegation? My love—your love—God-given, unimpeachable, being wrought according to Eternal Law, inevitably, without asking "by your leave," or "with your connivance." When it arrived at a matter of personal will, did you not repudiate it because it clashed with that other man-made law—the most important to humanity that civilization has yet instituted—to which you had sworn allegiance? Can you not separate the two—Lucy Wallace, the natural woman, who loved because she needs must when love blossomed in her soul, and Lucy Heath, the true wife, who repudiated, renounced that love because she was a wife?

Blameless quite. More: worshipful quite, as you stand queen over Self.

Dear, be still, and know yourself acquitted. Cease to torture those dear eyes that cry to me for help. Know that you could no more order that not to be than you could forbid John Heath to act against the voice of his own nature. There lay the rub. You could have gone on blameless forever. Only he could not have let you so go on.

WILLIAM FLEMING.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

DEAR FRIEND:

Your letter has quieted me.

LUCY.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

I thank you, dear.

WILL.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

DEAR WILL:

I want you to know that I am leading my normal life again. Twice this week I played bridge and managed not to incense my partners, and this afternoon I attended a concert. I have told myself that the self-centered habit of those who sorrow is vicious and does no one any good. So, while I wait for his return, I shall renounce this scourging Self which holds me helpless and captive to the past, and go forward trustingly with hopeful mien. It is almost five months now. Do you think—don't you think that soon he will have recovered from the maddening pain from which he fled, and come home to me, trusting to my honor as he did before?

LUCY.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

MY DEAR LUCY:

Do you really think John Heath ran away from you?

W. F.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

I don't understand your question at all. You confuse me. Won't you please speak outright whatever is in your mind? I think I shall be able to reason it out, though, to my poor mentality, it would seem as though one of us were crazy.

L. H.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

LUCY:

Have you never fully realized the truth—that—after the revelation—John Heath thought it all out in his slow, logical fashion, always with your happiness in view, and decided that the only *honorable* way for him to give you back that happiness was for him to efface himself? That the *act* of his going was merely the sum total of his thought—seemingly quick, as it always seems with him, but, in reality, carefully evolved? That, brave man that he is, he could never for a moment contemplate *fleeing* from you or from anything, but quietly and deliberately *walked* away from an untenable position, assuming that you would understand whither his act would point?

W. F.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

But, Will, no matter what he may do, no matter where he may be, while he is on this earth I am still his lawfully wedded wife.

LUCY.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

MY DEAR LUCY:

In your strangely persistent myopic attitude, you force me into a Mephistophelian role. Let me once for all speak without mental or sentimental reservations.

John Heath was a law-abiding man. He knew you to be a law-abiding woman. He did me the honor to assume that I was of like proclivity. Also, he knew that, after a certain period has elapsed—six months, in fact, in this

city—a woman may sue her husband for a divorce on the ground of desertion, and easily obtain it. After which, there is no law whereby he can interfere in any happiness she may desire. Also, he reasoned, with that same clear, temperate logic of which he is so selflessly possessed, that the best place for little Jack was with his mother—the highest proof he could offer of his implicit trust in you.

I submit the above to your calm attention, hoping you will pardon me for answering your importunity according to my best lights.

Faithfully yours,

WILLIAM FLEMING.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

I have waited this long to answer your letter, partly because it stunned me into sanity by its unquestionable clear-sightedness, partly because—I don't know why. Ah, yes, I do. It left me so sick at heart, Will, so cut off from my old props, my old concepts, so mercilessly at the beck and call of my own free will. But today I rallied by a sudden inspiration, caught myself back to my old standards, my old position, my old place in his life. I shall wait, Will. I shall prove to him—*after a certain period has elapsed*—that I do not accept his sacrifice, that I am still his, despite his assumption—his wife in fact as well as in name. Don't you see that inevitably in time he must discover his mistake and—acknowledge it?

I am quite triumphant today, almost elated. I have something to do—though that something be to do nothing. Good-bye, dear Will. Think of me as waiting.

LUCY HEATH.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

MY DEAR WILL:

I don't know whether you are in town or whether this will ever reach you. You gave no sign of ever having received my last letter. I know it did not call for an answer, but it seems that I cannot bear any more silences, cannot

take any *good* for granted. Where are you? Are you well? Are you working? Are you happy? Shall I ever hear from you again? The year is almost at an end—but where am I? God help me! And, I pray you, write to me.

LUCY HEATH.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

MY DEAR LUCY:

I am here; I am well; I am working. Am I happy? A certain would-be cheerful philosopher once said, "Work, and despair not." Which I take to be the creed of negation. It's like sealing up a rat hole: by and by the rat must die. Well.

I did not answer your letter because it did not seem to call for an answer. You had arrived at a satisfying decision which left me out of your scheme of salvation. Why should I continue the torture? That would be too much like a stubborn little boy who won't admit he's beaten. Give Jack my love. Last night I reeled off a yarn for him on the inclosed paper. Read it to him, with due regard for the expression marks. It must be my swan song for him, so don't spoil it by faulty interpretation. Good-bye.

W. F.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

WILL:

You are so cold, so lightly distant. You seem to have taken charming leave of me, to have left me standing in the middle of a desert universe—alone. I am chilled, quite shiveringly chilled. Am I truly so unworthy of your regard? I read your story to Jack—queer, it came on his fourth birthday; did you know?—and he thought it very funny. "Oh, ho!" he shouted, rolling on the floor, "Billy boy lost de tin sojer and de dog. He was a Goop, wasn't he, muddie?"

I think I interpreted it correctly—funnily for Jack, bitterly for myself. Am I a "Goop," too, Will? Have I played selfishly, destructively, with

both the tin soldier *and* the dog? The satire struck, as you intended.

Won't you turn your face toward me for a moment in kind toleration? I am so hopelessly twisted, Will. Won't you say something to set me straight?

LUCY

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

I am not "good," you know—not made of the stuff of which martyrs are made. *Not*, decidedly not, self-abnegatory. If I had been John Heath, I'd have punched the head of a certain fellow we both know and told him to go to hell. And let the devil attend to the rest. Brutal sort, eh? Well, that's my sort.

W. F.

LUCY HEATH TO WILL FLEMING

I beg you to speak more calmly. Your vituperation has little sense to it.

LUCY HEATH.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

Very well. I am calm. I will speak. I love you. With all the strength and tenderness of my manhood, I love you, Lucy. You know this, despite my foaming at the mouth a few days ago. Dear love, forgive it—I seemed to have come to the end of my limited patience. Well, and so it is said and written for all time—I love you. I believe that you love me. This, too, I write for all time. I believe that John Heath, regarding himself as a barrier to the happy consummation of our love for each other, removed that barrier. I believe that, by clinging to a deliberately severed tie, you make futile his great sacrifice. I believe that, by ignoring the voice of your love for me now, you futilely sacrifice yourself. I believe that, by ignoring my love for you, you futilely sacrifice me. Why must there be three when one—past recalling—was designed to make unnecessary the other two? It is false arithmetic, dear, false economy, as I told you long ago. It is wanton waste.

So I ask you to be my wife. I ask you to make possible our marriage by accepting the divorce which he has put within your reach. It is almost a year since his disappearance. Either he intends never to return to you or—he is dead. Is not this enough?

Beloved, sweetheart, I have kept myself in leash to write calmly to you. I await your summons.

Yours ever,

WILLIAM FLEMING.

WILL FLEMING TO LUCY HEATH

You do not write; you give no sign. This is the road to madness. At the risk of everything, I am coming to you.

W. F.

V

FLEMING stood in Lucy Heath's drawing-room. He had been standing, waiting so long at such high tension, that when the slight, black-robed figure entered he scarcely saw the starry, ethereal face, but, impelled by the irresistible, almost insane force of released repression, he sprang toward her and caught her to him.

Yet, at the same instant, he was fully aware that her frail hands were beating him from her, that the slight figure was struggling frantically from him.

His arms relaxed and he drew back as she presented to his shocked senses a face startlingly distorted, her eyes blazing denunciation, her fingers tugging at her collar as though it choked her. Twice she strove to stammer out her horse denial of him and at last succeeded.

"Never," she articulated with fierce hate, "never—*dare*—to touch me like that again!"

He regarded her with pale, compressed lips, his brows gathering ominously.

"You—you—evidently do not know who—what—I am," she denounced.

"Evidently not."

She turned from him, seeking surface composure, and he offered no demur.

When she finally sought his glance,

he was looking straight over her head, his lips still repellently compressed, a set pallor seeming to make rigid his whole head.

She regarded him for a space and presently a flame of blood suffused her skin from throat to brow. She advanced a step toward him and, as he paid no attention, touched him lightly on the shoulder.

He looked down without speaking at the slender white hand which rested there a moment and was then removed.

"I'm sorry, Will," she murmured sadly.

A faint smile, almost a sneer, stirred his lips and nostrils. "Are you?" he echoed without expression.

"I know—I am always saying that. But you can't understand. Won't you, please, be a little—patient?"

"Patient!"

"It is such a struggle—battle—so many things fighting within me. I—you almost strangled me then. Something did."

"You are absurd!"

"Perhaps—but I can't help it."

"Puerile!"

"Will!"

"Fanatic!"

"It is—myself."

"Unreasonable! Like a schoolgirl living up to a mawkish ideal."

"But—"

"Oh, bosh! This is ridiculous and might as well be ended now. I won't trouble you any more. Good-bye."

He flung out a tense hand, which she ignored, and he strode toward the door.

"Will!" The despair in her tremulous call swept the tempest in his soul into abrupt calm. He veered about.

Heavy, silent tears were staining her wistful, wan face, at the painful sight of which he sprang toward her.

"I am a brute," he said miserably.

"No, you are right," she returned with a sob, fumbling up her sleeve for her handkerchief. "But I am so distracted. Won't you sit down?"

"What's the use, Lucy?"

"We could think it out—together."

He dragged a chair forward, and they sat down facing each other. A long,

grave silence fell and quiet gradually encompassed their spirits.

"I am ready now," she said in low-voiced quietude.

"Better?" he asked gently.

"Yes. And I want to be reasonable."

"Then 'come, let us reason together.'" He smiled in tender reassurance upon her and her lips strove to respond. "Now?"

"Yes."

"Trusting to my honor?"

"Absolutely."

"You have been deserted, Lucy. Do you realize that?"

"Through my own fault."

"No one's fault. Inevitability."

"I might have killed it."

"But you did not."

"No. That is why it is a fault."

"Do you think you could have—killed it?"

After a pause she made answer very low. "No."

"Well, then?"

She searched his eyes for further enlightenment.

He answered in steady finality.

"That is what John Heath knew."

She kept her eyes on him now, as pupil to teacher.

"The rest we have thrashed out. He left it to me to make you happy. Do you think me worthy of his trust?"

His compelling eyes, his sonorous voice, affected her hypnotically. When she spoke it was as through dulled senses.

"If only there were no past."

"Let us not be idealists, dear. When a man and woman get to our age there is always a past of some sort and degree of intensity to put away. Must our beautiful, un-lived future pay for a finished past?"

"I—I am afraid to decide, Will."

"Love, look at me and then speak."

And who shall say his means were not fair?

Her brown eyes, suppliant in their bewilderment were held in his tender, grave gaze. Slowly the waxen lids drooped till the curling lashes touched her pale cheek.

His hands went tightly about her wrists. Then he rose.

Some months later the following final announcement appeared in the San Francisco newspapers, wedged in among several inconspicuous others of like import:

Lucy Wallace Heath has been granted an absolute decree of divorce from John Jessup Heath, the well known broker, on the ground of desertion, he having left her more than a year ago and failed to communicate with her since. The custody of the child, a minor, was given to the mother.

VI

COVE CITY, so named from the crescent curve the river bank takes where the little settlement runs down to meet it, is a mere convenient outlet for the farm lands beyond. Perhaps, because railroad enterprise has been thus far singularly blind to the resources of the rich outlying soil, this pocket village in the northwest corner of California looks a shade more provincial than its more fortunate prototypes, its potential nervous energy having atrophied through neglect. Even the leisurely schooners plying north and south seem to conspire with the general indifference to the life of the spot by marking Cove City for its sleepest attentions, always arriving somewhere between midnight and dawn. Freight is transferred from the warehouses or the steamers without disturbing the rest of nine-tenths of the villagers, only the piercing shriek of the sirens assuring them for a moment that they are still in touch with the world that moves.

On a certain cold March evening the habitués of "Brown's Emporium" had withdrawn to the comforting environs of the stove at the back of the store, when the front door opened, letting in a blast of icy air and two men of farmer-like appearance.

"Hello, boys!" exclaimed the younger of the two, dry and yellow as a wisp of hay. "Cold enough to freeze, ain't it?"

"You bet it is," drawled Brown

without turning around. "For Gawd's sake, Hank Lacy, shut that door and come in and tell us what that gassing boss of yours—"

"Drop it, Brown; here's—"

The door banged to suddenly with Farmer Allen's protestation, and Brown creaked round in his chair and rose in ponderous haste.

"Evening, Mr. Heath," he said with an embarrassed laugh, coming forward to the man who had stopped at the counter. "It ain't often we see you in town nights." He turned in behind the counter to meet the evident business intent of his visitor.

"No. I've just been out to the creamery with Hank, and drove in. How about that egg account, Mr. Brown?"

He spoke quietly, with no unnecessary words, throughout the slight transaction, and quietly, with no unnecessary delay, turned to go at its completion.

The man, Hank Lacy, with a foot on the stove and an eye to his movements, came at once to his side.

"The mare's at Connolly's?" asked Heath.

"Yes, sir. I'll be moving on soon."

"All right," Heath nodded. "Good night. I hope old Bossy has stopped her crying. Give her a warm mash, will you?"

"Yes, sir. Good night, sir."

Hank stood with awkward respect until the door had closed behind the strong figure, then rejoined the group around the stove.

"What's the matter with old Bossy?" panted Brown, following him and sinking with a puff into his deep cane-bottomed chair.

"Lost her calf. Couldn't shut her up. I think he ran away from her bel-lowing."

"Gone to the Lib'ary, I suppose. Lydy Burrows won't bother him with talk," suggested Farmer Allen with a wink and a caressing stroke to his beard. "Strikes me them two would make good silent partners for each other."

"And buy a talking machine to interpret," mused Willicutt, the lawyer.

"He don't need no pardner," remarked Hank. "All he wants for company is a newspaper or a cow. He gets what he wants out of 'em and they don't talk back."

"And it's a damn sight cheaper."

"Oh, that wouldn't cut no figger with him."

"Plenty of the stuff?"

"Plenty, and easy with it, too."

"Wonder where he got it?"

"Oh, shut up, Allen. You've wondered enough about that."

"Hoity-toity, Hank, don't be so soft about him! What was I saying against His Nibs? I was only thinking about them stories Boggs told before he left."

"Which, for instance?"

"Aw, come, come Hank! You know it's a queer thing for a man to go sailing, sailing round the world for two years, more or less, with never a stop on land for more'n a day if he could help it."

"Shucks, that's nothing! Plenty do it for sickness or because they like it. Look at those fellers what own yachts."

"Somehow, that don't wash," returned Allen with mouth pursed importantly. "Look at that story about the name: J. Jessup in Australia, and J. Jessup Heath when he gets to Eureka."

"I heard something about that," said Willicutt with interest, hitching his chair nearer. "You know, I was back East when he came last summer. You always get a story straight, Allen. Just what was it?"

Allen leaned back in the comfortable joy of a retailer of gossip, his keen, ruddy face, set in its frame of bristling black hair, seeming to start and crackle with life.

"Well, you know Jim Boggs threw up the ranch—left it, anyway, in Hank's charge—when the doctors told him to clear out with that cough of his and drop it in the ocean. And it was when he set sail from Australia—Adelaide, I think it was—for home, that he come across this here J. Jessup—leastways, that's the name he was sailing under. The man kind o' interested Jim—he looked so big and strong and lonely, and Jim was lonely,

too, and sick, in the bargain—and he thought it would feel good to be near him. And it did. Anyway, that's the way Jim told it. And they got a-talking together—at least, Jim did most of the talking and Jessup the listening—and Jim told him all about the ranch and how he wished he could sell it and clear out for good and all and go to the tropics. Jessup, you know, was bound for God knows where—anyway, he never spoke of coming to California.

"But somewhere in mid ocean he spoke up suddenly, as if he'd been sleeping on it ever since, and said, if Jim wouldn't mind he'd go home with him, and if it should happen to strike his fancy, they'd sure strike a bargain.

"Well, that ain't about the name, I know, but we're getting there by slow freight on a sailing vessel, you know. Well, to cut it short, the day they arrived in Eureka they had to wait a couple of hours for the boat, and the first thing Jessup asks for is none of your highballs, Leary, but where could he find a reading room, or something of that kind, where he could get a look at the papers and catch on to the world again. And Jim says the Public Lib'ary took everything and maybe What's-his-name could find all he wanted there. So Jim toted him there and went on for something jollier himself.

"And when he come back to the Lib'ary for him he found him standing before some old files—in fact, Jim noticed it was an old San Francisco *Chronicle* he was reading—and when Jim come alongside he said, 'Hello, Jessup! Find it?'

"But Jessup didn't move.

"And Jim puts his hand on his shoulder and the man turns his face to him, and it was the face of a dead man!"

"Oh, come, come," laughed Willicutt lightly, but with brightened eyes.

"That's right. Jim said he almost shouted out for help, but the dead man opened his mouth just like a live man and says quietly, 'Is it time to go, Mr. Boggs?' and turned away and went with him. And it was just as the boat was arriving here at Cove City that Jim

says, 'Here's home, Jessup.' And Jessup says quietly as ever, 'My name is Heath, Mr. Boggs—John Jessup Heath.' And there's your story about the names."

"And he bought the ranch under that name and 's been running it under that name ever since," supplemented Hank Lacy snappishly. "And there isn't a dawg, horse, cow or man on the place what wouldn't swear by him for anything he'd sign that name to, either."

"Oh, come, come," mused Willicutt soothingly. "There's nothing to get uppish about. The man was traveling incognito, that's all."

"But what for?" suggested Allen fractiously. "I take it he ain't a prince or a dook. But there are money kings who do the same, and murderers, too, and embezzlers and what not, as we all know. Not," he added, turning quickly to Hank, who had risen impetuously, "not that I'm saying he's any one of 'em, only I think it's a queer thing for a white man to do."

"Oh, you're spoiling for a sensation, Allen," laughed Willicutt again. "It's as bad as an itch with you. There's nothing in it. The man probably did it because it just pleased him to. Besides, he didn't take what wasn't his; he just dropped part of his own property."

"Huh!" grunted Hank Lacy triumphantly.

Meanwhile, Heath had gone down Main Street to the little cabinlike structure called the "Lib'ary." The structure and the rather valuable collection of miscellaneous volumes filling its shelves, showing a preponderance of law books but, on the whole, comprehending interests as widely removed as Socrates from Sardou, had been a gift to the town from one Cruikshank, a bachelor and soldier of fortune, who had sought health in the high redwoods of the adjacent uplands and found it, only to lose life a comparative moment later. And, because the township had been proud of both the giver and the gift, it had treasured the inheritance, guarded it and provided a custodian

for its acknowledged, but hardly appreciated value.

The woman seated at the small round table at the back of the lamp-lighted room looked up from her crocheting without a smile as Heath came in at the door.

She nodded perfunctorily in response to his salutation and dropped her eyes to her work without a change of expression. The dairyman was the library's most frequent night visitor, and Lydia Burrows had become almost as accustomed to the silence of his presence as to that of the books; almost as familiar with his inscrutable exterior as with the bindings of those printed entities whose secrets she had never tried to explore.

Heath generally betook himself to a shelf and was soon lost in a book at one of the side tables, but tonight he startled her by suddenly standing before her and addressing her directly.

"Good evening, Miss Burrows. My *Argonaut* hasn't come this week. Has yours?"

She cleared her throat to answer. "Yes," she said hoarsely, nodding sideways. "Over there somewhere on the magazine table. It came yesterday." A fit of coughing closed the dialogue.

Heath found the weekly and sat down to read it. The coughing seemed to accompany him half through the editorials, but stopped presently, only to disturb him with a strangled sob. He looked up quickly, but the woman's small face was blank, the mouth closed straight and thin and severe. Her eyes were drooped to her swift crocheting, her head with its tight coil of dark hair at the nape of the neck turned partially from him.

Heath immediately forgot her and continued his absorbed reading, his great hand supporting his grizzled head. An hour later he rose, looked for his hat and discovered that he had left it on Miss Burrows's table.

He walked over and, to his dismay, saw that the woman's face was drenched with tears, which fell, silent and unnoticed by her, down to her work. She started violently at his approach and

shaded her face with her work while she sought her handkerchief.

The man hesitated. But the lonely misery of the thin little shaken figure before him called for some comment. "Can I—pardon me—can I help you, Miss Burrows?"

His quiet, grave voice reached her distress like a sustaining force. She continued to cry soundlessly into her handkerchief for a moment, then raised her blurred face to his kindly gaze.

"I forgot you were here," she stammered. Yet she had made no sound.

"I couldn't help seeing," he apologized, noting her gathered brows, the outshoot of her lower lip, and his face flushed hotly in understanding. With a murmured, "I beg your pardon," he was turning away, when her hard voice arrested him.

"I guess you might as well say good-bye to me, Mr. Heath," she said with an abortive laugh. "You probably won't find me here the next time you come."

"Why, I'm sorry for that. Is your cough so bad?" He spoke with a gentle concern which somehow eased her taut nerves, at least enough to call forth the few words which shot from her lips like bullets.

"Cough? That's nothing. It's nothing personal. It's only a case of fifth wheel, that's all—if you know what that means."

Again Heath felt that aching sense of comprehension, of identification with her mood. Fifth wheel! If he understood what that meant! He met the now smoldering blaze of her tear-rimmed dark eyes with a dumb, sorry look.

Nevertheless, the look was expressive of enough to induce Lydia Burrows's concentrated bitterness of heart to gush forth further, the plug once removed.

"It's always been that—the fifth wheel with me. Good for an emergency but, at any other time, in the way. Good to call on in time of your need, but ignored for any need of her own. It's been that way ever since I was old enough to—to fill a vacancy.

I was always good enough to help out for any old thing—that's why I'm not good enough for any good thing now. It was all right to make Liddy Burrows keeper of the white elephant Cruikshank left on their hands so long as no one else wanted the job, but here comes Harry Gibbs home from Goldfield minus a hand, so it's, 'Get out, Liddy Burrows; you're standing in the way.'

His comprehension grew to a thrill almost dramatic in its force at the harsh climax of her words, and Heath's heavy hand clenched as it rested upon the table. His eyes met hers darkly, but Lydia Burrows could not know how much of that look was for her, how much for a past suddenly dragged quivering alive from its grave.

"Are you sure?" he asked. "Can't anything be done?"

"Oh, no," she said, as if wearied by the contention, and she began folding her work into a small linen bag. "It's all settled. I'm to go tomorrow or next day."

"But is that square? Is your—"

"Month up? Yes. Fortunately, I'll have full pay—it will pay last month's board. Next month's—well, it's no use crossing a bridge till you get to it." She turned her back abruptly, pinning on her plain round hat before the little mirror behind her.

Here was a phase John Heath had never had to contend with. It brought swift action shorn of all self-consciousness.

"Please consider me your friend, Miss Burrows," he said quickly, "your banker, if you will, ready to make any loan. I have a large fund of—understanding."

She spun around, her face alive with indignation, but this died out as quickly as it had sprung up at sight of the simply kind look upon Heath's face.

She heaved a long gasp. "Thank you," she said dully, struggling into a small, tight black jacket. "I never borrow. I've always found something to do—if not today, tomorrow. Don't"—her eyes gathered darkness again—"don't speak of this to anybody, please. I've never blubbered before;

nobody knows I can cry—nobody, but you, now." She raised her head defensively.

"Trust me; nobody else will ever know," he said quietly. "Good night, then, since—"

"Good night," she returned shortly, turning awkwardly from his proffered hand to put out the lamp flaming in the bracket behind her.

Heath, thus dismissed, left at once.

The night was still, clear but stingingly cold, yet sweet with springing grass and a faint, far-away breath of redwoods. He found his horse at Connolly's barn and, mounting her, with a brief word to the stable boy, turned her head northward toward the ranch.

The animal broke into a long, loping gait, rhythmic, deliberate, like the beat of a drum. "Fifth wheel! Fifth wheel!" the hoofbeats repeated over the hard, winding road, past the little singing, rushing brooks, through the clumps of forest growth. "Fifth wheel! Fifth wheel!" they scoffed as he turned into the trail, past Maynard's rustling fields, past the silent little district schoolhouse, on beyond Allen's and then Horton's farm, on, on, beating out sense and meaning, only the beating of his heart responding, strophe and antistrophe, as in a Greek chorus.

The ranch buildings lay low, shadowy and silent. He dismounted in the stable yard, and loosening the saddle he mechanically led his horse to the trough. Men and beasts had sought rest, and the hush of night, undisturbed now by the maddening bellowing of old Bossy for her calf, might have wrapped Heath in its subduing peace had he been conscious of his surroundings and actions, but, lost as he was in the brutal grip of a distorting passion, he moved in it senselessly. Stabling his mare by intuition, he came, like a blind thing, past the long stretch of whitewashed barns, past the dairy house—his own particular care—and round the curving walk under the oaks to the graveled path leading to the house, seeing nothing. He stumbled up the few outer steps and into the sitting room, fumbling for a match and

lighting the student lamp on the table as if impelled thereto by some pressing purpose.

Then, at a standstill, he stood clutching the table, laboring with his breath like an agonizing leviathan. The perspiration stood in huge beads on his forehead, his eyes stared, his jaws were rigid. A terrible groan escaped him—another and another; he trembled convulsively from head to foot. Then, lurching forward, he sank into a chair and his face was lost in his hands.

Fifth wheel!

And this hell fire through which he was now passing had been evoked by Lydia Burrows's bitter fling, branding him not so much with his own superfluity as with the analogous picture, etched as by fire upon the retina of his mind—the perfect mating of Lucy Heath, his life's star, *his wife*, with Will Fleming.

The strong man writhed in torture. His hands clenched harder over his tightly closed eyes as if to shut out the devilish taunt of it. "Let me not think, not think!" his maddened soul implored. But the visions, bearing others, inevitable in the logic of imagination, persisted, vision upon vision, like moving pictures, vivid as life.

By and by, spent, wrecked, he leaned back weakly in his chair, still and passionless.

Too indifferent to rest, he made no move for bed, but continued to stare dully before him. He had been through such cataclysms before in the beginning, but many months had elapsed since he had been last beset.

What did it matter, anyway? The past was dead; he had deliberately buried it under this farm life, this reversion to nature, this absorption of self with the elements and lower animal forms about him. Personality? A hideous striving. Better this: selfless force giving itself without thought beyond the necessity of the day, taking its food and rest like the beasts of the field, content, unthinking, folded in the universal machine.

If only there were no ghosts—no

ghosts to beckon one back from the slumberous present which they made hideous! Well, of such is the kingdom of man, for such is he lord over lesser things. The cold, corroding cynicism deepened the line sorrow had welted at either side of the nose, curled the corners of the close pressed lips, inflated the thin nostrils, mocked knowingly in the tiny wrinkles marking the outer corners of his eyes. Had the facial projection lasted he might have sat as model of a satyr.

But, being what he was, a creature both of reticence of thought and of reticence of emotion, the disfigurement slowly faded as though a veil of gentleness had been superimposed to cloud it.

Others were even as he; others were struggling with fortune's handicaps; others were being worsted in the inevitable battle for the survival of the fittest. That poor, miserable girl down at the library, sick, unprotected, *unnecessary*. Fifth wheel, she called it, alas, with what bitter perspicuity! What was to become of her? Destined to be ground to nothing in the mills of the gods? And meanwhile—the torture of the grinding!

Something, surely, could be done to controvert such a fate. Why, when a man *sees*, as John Heath saw only too well, he may stand as fate to another. Not to stand forth in such a light would be to shirk a responsibility, to be both coward and criminal. Yet how? She had repulsed his offer of monetary assistance, and that was her crying need—comfort and leisure and *the sense of being necessary*. Yet how to give her these?

A sudden wonder passed over his heavy features. A doubt, almost a smile, widened his eyes. Why, of course! It would be interesting to watch the transformation. It might even react upon his own distorted peace and give *him* a sense of being necessary. There were two of them; in thought his hand closed over hers reassuringly. He remembered, with a half-smile of sadness, a story he had been forced to read in French in his

school days, about a prisoner who had found solace and even joy in caring for a little flower. Sentimental rot he had called it then, but there seemed something reasonable in it now.

Resolution gave quiet to his face; manhood with a definite purpose looked forth from it interestedly. He regarded the contingencies without flinching.

Marriage. Very simple. The only means to the end. Why not? The word carried no idea to him now but that of legal form. Social red tape. Once—Calf days—let them go!

If Lucy Heath, the very fountain and inspiration of all that was fine and ideal could so regard it, why not he, of so much baser metal? She had torn away for him all the illusions haloing that ideal. Let him accept the thing in the rough, as nine-tenths of the world evidently accept it:

Marriage: a legalized partnership.

Divorce: a legalized dissolution of said partnership.

Easy enough. Well, for another try—with the open eyes of experience!

VII

Two days later, John and Lydia Heath entered the little sitting room of the ranch house where Haru, the Japanese, had lighted a cheery fire, and John, turning to her, said with a gentle smile: "Make yourself at home. This is your home now, you know."

A high, excited color burned in Lydia Burrows's cheeks, or, rather, Lydia Heath's, so metamorphosed an hour before by the grace of law. She regarded the leaping flames a moment before answering, her fingers twirling in and out of the top buttonhole of her jacket without undoing it. When she spoke it was directly, though jerkingly, and, after a swift, sliding glance at him, her eyes again sought the leaping tongues of flame.

"Yes. Thank you. You are very kind. I want to tell you that, though I—seemed to accept your strange act of—charity—your offer of a 'home and

protection,' as you put it—without question or—or hesitation, it was not without question and satisfactory answer. I've got used to living according to a system, a kind of rapid or mental arithmetic, at which lifelong practice has made me hideously expert. I'm telling you this because, somehow, your honesty—which was one of the big numbers in that example I summed up so quickly—makes me. I'm accepting your charity because it would be a fool act for me not to. I *won't* look the gift horse in the mouth." She looked up at him now with dogged, open glance.

No sentiment there, and John, though unprepared for this swift adjustment, straightened to it with pleased relief.

"But we won't call it charity," he said, as if acknowledging her elucidation. "Rather, let us call it a matter of sympathy and expedience on both our parts. We are two very sensible beings."

"I agree to the expedience on my part. I fail to find any cause for sympathy from me to you."

Absolute, uncompromising candor, hard as nails, rough, but divertingly clear and cool-headed under the circumstances. It lightened the difficulties for John.

"Well," he responded with a whimsical look, "when you get over adding up your debit page, perhaps you'll find one for me. I expect you to. And if you get your trial balance correct I'll know it. Now the house and the Jap are at your command. When you get warmed up, I hope you'll take off your hat and coat and stay a while. This is butter making day and I must see what Hank's been doing while I was gone." The long speech had been a kindly effort, and now he gladly turned to go.

"The Jap knows that we—that I am your wife?"

His hand was on the doorknob. Why she had had to put it in just that particular form only the imps of fortune know, but John Heath, hearing, turned suddenly rigid from head to heel.

"Eh? Of course," he dragged forth,

without looking at her, and he went out.

Lydia held that changed note a moment after it had passed into silence, as if weighing it. Then, seemingly satisfied, she shrugged resignedly, and began to take a mental inventory of the room.

Heath, who had intended changing his tweeds for his fresh dairy outfit, stepped at once into the cold sunshine of the outer world.

It was two of the afternoon, and as he approached the dairy house two of the men came out and down the few steps carrying full buckets of skimmed milk and, without stopping, casting only a sheepish glance toward the still figure awaiting their descent, went on down the yard. Gleaming milk pails and vessels lay airing in the sun on the west porch, and as he came into the sweet, cool whiteness of the house with its open northern windows, the regular slap-dash of the cream in the churn greeted his ears.

Hank Lacy, absorbed in his molding, was oblivious of his silent entrance, and it was only several minutes later that he turned in the course of his occupation and saw with a great start that he was not alone. There instantly rushed upon him the memory of Farmer Allen's words, spoken only two nights before: "And it was the face of a dead man," and the dairyman, moved by the unfathomable feeling which always made him John Heath's passionate advocate, came toward him.

"Not well, sir?" he asked anxiously.

John's small, deep set eyes looked into his with a sick, dumb appeal. He had heard Hank's words no more clearly than he had gathered the sense of the steady sounds and spirit of industry about him. But as the strong hand touched his shoulder he drew himself together with a sharp shudder.

"Yes," he said vaguely. "It's all right, Hank, isn't it? The butter, I mean, and—and everything? You can go, now I'm here."

"After you've changed, sir?"

Heath glanced down at his clothes with a flash of slumberous hate, then

turned perfunctorily to go. His feet struck heavily across the clean brick floor as if he were loath to depart; he reached the porch reluctantly and stood doggedly gazing beyond to the clover meadows where his herd grazed in the shadow of the great hills. The lowing of a cow came to him long and far across the green, whispering fields; sweet, clean breaths of recreated, recreating, pulsing nature blew to him, and he held to these intangibilities as if in appeal for respite. If only he could be wafted away on this insensible tide—away, anywhere, out of reach of the ranch house!

Well, it had been his own prescription—he must take his medicine. He went hardly down the steps and turned into the curving path leading across to the house.

At the turn he met the grinning stable boy in the farm cart.

"Got some papers for you this trip," said the boy, fumbling under the seat.

Heath held out his hand to receive the package and, when the boy had rattled along to the stable, stood a moment to unfold a crackling San Francisco newspaper. Here, indeed, was excusable delay. His nervous eye took in the headlines, traveled with minute care up and down the columns of each page in a habit which had become almost an instinct with the years. He was looking for names.

Presently he returned to a short, inconspicuous item near the middle of a column; something there had arrested his attention only subconsciously and he had glanced further. He saw now. It was the commonplace name, Jack. As often as he had come across it in this way, he had always returned to it as he did now.

Ah!

The blood which had left his face rushed in a mad blow from his bronzed neck to his cheeks, his brow, into his very eyes; it moved his fingers till they dug holes into the paper which he held so tensely before him.

There it was, clear as day: *Jack Wallace Heath*.

It laughed out at him like a little

face. It drew him—drew him— He seized it—his own. And he read in exiled ecstasy:

- A HERO IN EMBRYO

A bit of pretty heroism was witnessed by a number of passers-by yesterday afternoon on Jackson Street just as the primary pupils of the Pacific Heights School were being dismissed. A small, hatless girl ran toward Webster Street and, without looking about, made a dash diagonally across the corner. In a second the child would have been ground under the wheels of a speeding automobile, had not another flying little figure hurled itself upon the unconscious child and precipitated both just beyond the reach of the juggernaut. The chauffeur turned in his flight and, seemingly satisfied, sped on. But a crowd of excited pupils, teachers, and passers-by gathered at once about the tableau being enacted in the middle of the street.

The little girl was crying and angrily denouncing her rescuer, despite the intercession of several teachers. "He dirtied my dress," she insisted through her tears. "He's a bad, bad boy to throw me down and I'll tell my teacher." The boy, not much higher than herself, holding himself straight as an arrow, but frowning perplexedly as he violently brushed his cap, retorted rightly: "I had to. Gee! She'd 'a' been run over if I didn't," and he would have been off had not a lady arrested him by placing her hand on his head and turning up his delicate, blushing face. "You brave boy," she said, "what is your name?"

"Jack Wallace Heath," he answered, wriggling from her hold.

"Well, Jack Wallace Heath," she called after his childish figure darting through the crowd, "you're a little hero and—"

"No, I'm not," the boy shouted back, turning about, but still retreating; "I'm big now. I'm nearly seven, and she's only a little kid!"

The crowd dispersed with a laugh, and a teacher led homeward the still indignant child who was "only a little kid."

John Heath laughed—queerly, too—a laugh that was something between a sob and a croon.

Jack Wallace Heath! Jack Wallace Heath! *His!* His boy! His son! *His!*

The little ehap! Straight as an arrow, eh? And wears a cap, too—a

cap! Trousers, too, perhaps—and a shirt! No, what do boys "nearly seven" wear, anyway? He'll look it up. Schoolboys—Pacific Heights School! He knows it well—John Heath does; big, square-faced building. And Jack Wallace Heath goes there, does he? Jack Wallace Heath, straight as an arrow, and wearing a cap—His eyes gloated again over the printed words. "His delicate face." Why delicate? But he uses slang: "Gee," he says, and "kid." By George! Pretty soon he'll be saying "damn," and Heath grinned in imbecile, disproving pride. But why delicate? He must look into that.

"I must see for myself," said John Heath to himself with sudden gravity. "I must see that my son is in good health."

With a fixed, shining stare in his eyes, and still holding the paper, he walked straight on to the house.

He saw Lydia, hat and coat removed, moving about in the dining room. He studied her a moment without change of expression, then walked in. He spoke at once, steadily, but mechanically, the fixed, shining stare still illumining his eyes.

"I have had some news which calls me to San Francisco," he announced impersonally. "My presence is required there. I must satisfy myself about my son's condition."

"Your son!" repeated Lydia, dumfounded.

"Yes. He is delicate, it seems. Though he goes to school and—performs heroisms and—wears a cap."

Had the man suddenly gone stark, staring crazy? Was this the hideous explanation of her strange uplifting from the slough of despond? Her eyes devoured him sharply, and something in his appearance subtly corroborated her fear, but she sprang between him and the door as, with this new accession of Malvolian dignity upon him, he made to leave her.

"Wait a minute," she commanded roughly. "You must explain. I know nothing of a son. I know nothing of your past. I chose to ignore that

question. You have a son—that is nothing to me; but have you another wife up your sleeve?"

He regarded her hardened face, only dimly seeing her, surely not realizing her, the same fixed stare turned full upon her.

He answered like an automaton, but with finality. "I have no wife," he said, and put out his hand to the door.

The repudiation referred only to her question, she understood, but she persisted in frantic self-protection.

"You'll have to answer me more in detail now. I don't care a straw about your past or the people in it; what I want to be assured of is that I am your lawful wife. Was that marriage rite performed in Judge Irving's office this morning all straight? Were you and I legally married?"

He studied her now with painful concentration, and presently a gleam of comprehension fell like a flashlight across the shining stare in his eyes.

"Why not?" he asked in a low tone.

"You spoke of a son."

The stare flickered radiantly a second, then died out. He looked down at her in dead calm.

"That cannot affect you," he said with slow deliberation. "That marriage ceremony was absolutely legal, so far as I am concerned. There is no one, no law, to refute it. But," he raised his head dominantly, "I have decided to go to San Francisco and nothing can deter me. Joe Peterson's launch will take me down the river. I'm sorry. Please stand aside."

He had acknowledged her, though he held her aloof. Somehow poor Lydia was constrained to be satisfied for the present. She moved from the door.

He turned the knob, but paused on the threshold, compelled by a tardy but struggling contrition. "I'll write from San Francisco—when to expect me back," he said thickly. "It will probably be only a day or two—my stay. I'm sorry. Good-bye." He held out a distant but kind hand. She

placed hers in it for a second, and they parted.

Such was their "honeymoon."

Five days later she received the following letter:

PALACE HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO,
April 12, 1906.

MY DEAR MADAM:

What I am about to write is very hard to express. I think I shall begin by trying to explain my sudden unpardonable departure. I had no intention, no desire, to hurt you, and I hope you realized that. I don't know how clear or how muddled my excuse was to you that day; I only know that a necessity was upon me which impelled me to this trip, from which nothing and nobody under the sun could have withheld me. But my mind is quite clear and just, now, and I see what I have done and what I have to undo.

I believe I mentioned my son in the stress of my going. I had just read something about him in the newspaper, and I had had no word of him for three years. I believe it robbed me of my reason; I believe I was only semi-conscious until I reached this city. So much in explanation to you of my conduct that day.

I know you will forgive what I am about to say, because, as you so distinctly made it understood upon the day of our marriage, that marriage was to you simply a matter of expedience.

Realizing that the impulse, on my own account, was a mistake, I beg you to forgive it and to consider carefully the proposition I am about to make to you.

If you will agree to annul the marriage upon the grounds of incompatibility or whatever you will, I will deed to you the entire ranch and everything thereon that pertains to it. If not, my scheme for helping you has failed utterly, for I shall, in that event, dispose of the ranch otherwise, as I have no intention of returning to it. If you agree, and decide to continue the farming, I would recommend Hank Lacy to you as an honest and efficient foreman, whose industry and ability will help to net for you a comfortable livelihood from the farm produce. I refer you to the books which I myself have kept since acquiring the place. They are in the desk in the sitting room, the keys to which are in the upper right-hand drawer of the dresser in my bedroom.

I hope you will understand that I desire only your welfare, and will, upon reflection, pardon me for any discomfort I may have occasioned you. As soon as I hear from you in the affirmative I shall have the deed drawn up and sent to you at once. Judge Irving will prove a trustworthy guide should you advise with him. Address me at the above hotel.

I again wish you well and hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours very sincerely,

JOHN JESSUP HEATH.

She read it once with swimming senses, again deliberately and comprehendingly and yet again for verification of the bewildering details.

Presently she raised her head while her fingers lingeringly folded the epochal missive. Her eyes moved from article to article in the room, traveled to that beyond, sped in imagination to the others without, above. Slowly she turned herself till she faced the window framing a comprehensive view of the entire farm, from its excellent barns, houses and outhouses near at hand to its cornfield rolling far to the fragrant meadows, where, dimly, she could descry the red line of the cows at pasture.

A slow, acquisitive smile dawned, mounted from lips to eyes, spread till it illumined her whole starved, darkened being. She laughed richly, remembering the old adage of a fool and his money. She threw back her head and breathed the long, deep, restful breath of happiness at last attained; she was sole and undisputed monarch of all she surveyed.

VIII

THE dial on the *Chronicle* building registered eight o'clock, and a merry April sun quickened to joyousness the hearty pulse of San Francisco's morning activities.

Eight o'clock, too, by John Heath's watch as, hurrying from the lobby of the Palace Hotel, he drew it forth to verify, and pulling his hat well over his eyes made a bee line across Market Street. The sweet morning air was rife with the exquisite breath of lilacs, nodding their plummy heads like so many delicious, old-fashioned French ladies from the baskets of the flower boys. The newsboys cried their wares, trucks rumbled, feet sped, car bells jangled, automobiles flew, hammer and pick upon steel and stone echoed through the *mêlée*.

Life, life, life! was the song—sane, surging, sweet.

Why did the shop windows seem to twinkle and Union Square laugh browsingly and the Dewey Monument exult and the golden balls topping the old gray walls of the Temple Emanuel smile ancient benediction? Why did John Heath, instead of skirting the heights, elect to climb up, up the steeps, past the Fairmont's granite pile laboring to completion, and stand for a second with indrawn breath on lordly Nob Hill, to glimpse the heavier symbols of traffic down southward and eastward encircled by the silvery waters rounding from Gate to harbor—and then swing on westward with a deep sense of glad content? It was only that into his quickened soul the spirit of well-being abroad had witched itself, willy-nilly. For on this sweet April morning of the year nineteen hundred and six San Francisco had waxed fat and laughed among its dimples.

The pellucid air grew warmer. He traversed the ups and downs of California Street, past houses great and small, beautiful, shabby and shabby-genteel, and all the while the spirit was growing and mellowing within him, till, passing the little mart of Polk Street, he gained Van Ness Avenue, wide, stately, aristocratic as a prince among its lesser subjects, where one great red stone palace kinged it over the pretty residences surrounding it. And now the sun touched the pavements to music—or was it really Pan's pipe dancing the children schoolward?

Eighteen minutes past eight by his watch: his footsteps hastened. By twenty minutes past he was standing, still as the weathercock aloft there in the blue distance, waiting, a large, quiet figure on the heights at the northeast corner of Webster Street and Broadway.

Pitter-patter went the stream of little feet, now loitering, now running, the voices shrilling through the rosy haze of the sun-tipped morning.

John Heath faced the water and Alcatraz, that seeming dream island from the shore, but one eye covertly turned

down Broadway and all his senses were attuned to the pitter-patter of one little pair of feet, the individual essence of which he had learned by heart to discern from all others within the past week.

And now it came, springing, joyous, light. John Heath knew that in another minute it would have passed, that when it would have passed the music of the day would have ceased for him. Yet this had been the food he had found sufficient for all his spiritual needs for five—six—days, with an interminable interval of forty-eight hours of total abstinence in between.

But no! The springing, joyous step approached the averted figure, lingered, stopped full.

"Is it—rules and regulations?"

The sweet, piping voice was close—was alone with him—was addressing him. He knew it, knew that under the thrill and spell of it he must turn and meet his son face to face.

Slowly he accomplished the move, and looked down upon the upturned child face, and the blur of a great emotion shadowed his sight.

"Is it—rules and regulations?" repeated the piping voice, agog with curiosity.

He must speak, answer, by all the powers of common sense of which he was possessed, but oh, how much easier just to have gazed his fill in silence!

"Is—what, rules and regulations?" he repeated very low.

"Do you have to come every morning just to—here?" He swung over on one foot, spanning the space between them and coming down close beside him on the same flagstone.

Heath's lips quivered to a smile. "Oh, no," he answered still very low for fear of breaking the enchantment.

"Why do you, then? When we go just so far in school, it's the rules and regulations. Is it—a prescription, then?"

"Prescription?"

"Did the doctor say it was good for you—to stop right here?"

"Yes. It is good for me—to stop right here."

"Gee! That's funny. I told my mud—my mother."

"What did you tell your mother?" questioned the very low voice.

"Why, you see—" The little figure came still closer, would have touched him had John Heath's rigid figure stirred, the boy face, so like, so strangely like the flowerlike beauty of Hers, raised to whispering nearness in an impulse of childish confidence. "You see," he explained, a flute of indignation ruffling the clear, piping voice to warmth, "after that time when I kicked that little kid away from the automobile—I didn't mean to *kick* her, you know, but it went quicker that way—my mother wanted my *nurse* to go to school with me! 'S if I'd do *that*! All the fellers would laugh. So when I saw you standing here every morning I knew it would make her feel good if she knew; so I told her."

"Yes?"

"Yes. I said, 'There's a man across the street who comes just so far every morning, and he'll watch out for me, I'm sure.' Won't you?"

"What?"

"Watch out for me. So's I can tell muddie?" The little slip went unperceived by the child.

"Surely."

"I told her so," exulted the child. "And she said how did I know, and I said I just did."

"You knew?"

He nodded conclusively. "O-oh! It's terribly late. What time is it?" He was backing in haste toward the edge of the pavement.

"Take care—you'll fall," cried John, striding toward him, his hand in his fob pocket.

The boy shouted triumphantly. "I told my mother you'd watch out," he asseverated joyously. "What time?"

"Ten minutes to nine."

"Jiminy!" And he was off.

But halfway down the street he turned about, never stopping in his retreat, to open and shut his small, up-lifted hand in the manner children have of waving.

A silent chuckle took John Heath as he watched.

Just look at him, will you! The little black twinkling legs of him. Sturdy too, by George! Good enough to stand up against any of 'em. Delicate? Nonsense! With that rich color suffusing the fine little face, those clear, laughing eyes, gray as November skies, to be sure—like his own in color, eh? Well— There! He's turned into Washington Street—lost to view! And suddenly the street grew empty.

Heath turned about. He walked off as if with set purpose, plunged, though he was, in thought. Queer thought for John Heath, reticent even to himself. Thoughts of himself—of his meaning in the world, hitherto a mockery. Now he had found the key. The dark had been made light. A cubit had been added to his stature; he knew himself a man among men—being a father.

There was work for him to do and a light provided whereby he might see. Responsibility, like a royal mantle, fell upon him, and folding it about him he bade his soul walk proud. Involuntarily he raised his head and thrust back his low drawn, concealing hat. A sweet dignity was upon him; he wished to meet his fellows, to look them in the eye and let them see how fatherhood had raised him from the slough into which he had fallen.

"And I dare look *him* in the eye," thought John Heath with an exultant thrill, "as I dare look into my God's!" He had found a religion, and this was his mighty prayer of thanksgiving, for he was a simple man, glad to know he had been good—for his son's sake.

Plans began to form, deliberate plans for a future wherein this child was the central practical concept. "He is mine," he said to himself, "and I shall assert my claim, belated though it may be. I shall demand—my share. I shall write to Her—no, I shall go. She is an honest woman. She is a gentle woman. She is kind. She will understand. I will say to Her: 'I must see my son occasionally. I will leave it to you to say how often or how seldom—in punishment for my former madness

in renouncing him. I will leave it to you.' She is a—marvelous woman to understand."

If at that point his heart bowed before her in acknowledgment as of old, his thought went on upright to its goal. "There is, of course, the possibility of the man's interfering—he may have taken out papers of adoption; still, the boy retains my name—and he is a just man. Besides, she is there, and I trust to her. I will go today—no, tomorrow; perhaps I had better give warning. Ah, Sargent! Yes, it is John Heath."

He felt his hand wrung tremendously. He was unconscious of his great pallor as he was thus hailed again into his old life.

"Why, you're a sight for sore eyes. Back to stay?"

"Perhaps. I think so—yes."

"Good! Be on 'Change this morning?"

"I hardly think so. I—"

"Oh, of course you will. Be in my office—Mills Building, you know—before eleven. Things are humming. I'll promise you an ovation."

It did not prove exactly an ovation, but the cordiality of his reception was unmistakable. The men who had known his large, quiet figure in the past had known him as standing for weight and worth of the best financial import, and his reappearance in their bustling midst was felt as an access of solidity and strength in affairs. He accepted an invitation to lunch at the club of which he had once been an honored member. And here, again, a genial recognition greeted him. There had always been a barrier of silence between Heath and his most congenial acquaintances—intimates he had never had—and this tacit recollection of his peculiarity saved him now from many embarrassing questions which pressed to the front at sight of him. Barring an exclamation or two over his prolonged absence, which he ignored, there was no allusion to that sudden disappearance which, with its piquant consequences, had set social curiosity a-dance about three years before. He stood

the ordeal firmly, that inner calm, born of his determination, making these moves but accessories to his intense ambition.

He betook himself later to his hotel, prepared to write the letter which would apprise Her of his presence in the city and of his intention of making himself known to his son, and of his ensuing desires.

Still laboring under the spell of the morning, he sat down to his writing in perfect self-possession. With firm hand he touched pen to paper, filling in the date on the hotel stationery. He looked down at the white sheet, and from it a face like a miniature looked out to him. He put his hand over it, closing his eyes. It was several seconds before, shaking himself roughly, he began in dogged resolution, his mind holding to the hardy words he dragged forward to stun retrospection:

MADAM:

It may interest you to know that I am in San Francisco. I have seen my son, Jack, and it is my desire to make myself known to him, and to see him at stated intervals—as often as you see fit to grant the privilege. I trust to your good judgment, feeling sure that you, in return, will trust to my taking no advantage of the confidence in me, if conferred.

JOHN J. HEATH.

It was an announcement, purporting no more, no less. He glanced over its ashen courtesy. It braced him grimly, and he sealed it as impersonally as he might have sealed a business communication.

There remained the addressing, the envelope waiting in white, sinister suggestion. A revulsion, akin to sickness shook him, and he pushed the thing from him. "Later," he promised himself.

He looked at his watch—it was five o'clock. It had taken him two hours to write six lines. "This is suicidal," he thought disgustedly. "Tomorrow I begin my reincarnation."

He rang for the evening paper and when it was brought glanced restlessly over the theatrical announcements. He noticed with aroused interest that the Metropolitan Opera Company was

singing at the Grand Opera House, the bill for that evening being "Carmen," with Caruso as the great drawing card.

"She will be there," he told himself, and decided to go. The question of evening clothes presented itself unexpectedly, but he dismissed it with a smile and the reminder that he would probably find standing room only; in fact, that was the vantage point of obscurity from which only, he assured himself, he could see without being seen.

It was a sweet evening, one of San Francisco's pleasantest, springlike, warm without sultriness, a gentle breeze stirring. As he walked down Fourth Street, its gray old shops aglow with lights, a line of carriages and motor cars had already formed, stretching from Market Street to Mission, slowly advancing round the corner to the awning-covered entrance to the Opera House. The cars, packed to suffocation, jangled their bells excitedly amid the trample of horses and whirl of motors moving out of the way. A crowd of the idle curious had gathered across the street and fringed the outposts of the policemen, marshaling in as good order as possible the conveyances which dropped their fairylike freight, and were hurried on to make way for the next.

A gala night indeed. When Heath, having secured his ticket, pressed on with the late arriving crowd up the marble steps of the wide lobby, he caught the excitement of luxurious gaiety; he lost self-consciousness and was ready for the adventure.

It was a representative audience, representative of the romantic city's wealth and prodigality and cosmopolitanism. The great lower semicircle gleamed with jewels and beautiful femininity, fortified by the more sober evening attire of the men. The show before the curtain, conceived in social emulation, seemed thus to pay homage due to the artists of the mimic show to follow.

The flutter of silently sweeping entrances continued throughout the overture, and Heath, standing at the back among a crowd of other seatless ones,

waited, watched furtively for the one for whom alone he was there. But the graceful, mocking music, the marching, passionate strains, played on, and still she did not come.

It was only when the curtain rose that he realized with what a wild hunger to see her he had come, for the fever died down within him, leaving him wistfully weary as he stood frustrate and let the music claim him. It was Carmen, the enchantress, Carmen, the wily luring, with her dusky grace and provocative rose, who roused him to a restive excitement. And, from act to act, the sense of impending tragedy, breathed by the romantic, beautiful music, grew almost to a physical pain. For such "love" men became as mad beasts—for a passionless coquette—But above the call of the castanets, above the grand trio in the picturesque mountain fastness, something lovelier called, something dim and elusive, but with soft eyes of golden brown. So, in dual consciousness, he seemed to waver between the mimic, earthy theme and his own lost, ghostly ideal. Only when the tenor's last, hopeless wail stabbed him, as it were, to the heart, did the tragedy truly reach him, and he shuddered back to his surroundings.

With that glorious voice echoing sadly through the pageant of the passing audience, he rose, and moved out leisurely with the throng, bowing here and there, above the press of heads, to several surprised salutations. For the most part, however, he kept his attention fixed ahead upon the clamor in the night without, for in those days the motors were not in the ascendant, and the plunging of fiercely restrained or balking horses, together with the whistling and cries of the policemen, made a confusion worse than confounded.

Finally disentangling himself, Heath pushed ahead and stepped out into the pure night air, making straight for his hotel. Many had arrived before him, however, and were now streaming resplendent into the beautiful palm garden, that storied court so dear to all San Franciscans. As he stepped from the elevator, he glanced down for a

moment over the gallery into the gracious revelry of it, the palms, the flowers, the lights, the strains from the orchestra reaching him softly, the waiters moving among the tables, silent and assiduous, the women exquisitely attired, brilliantly begemmed, beaming festivity upon their attendant knights.

"There was a sound of revelry by night—"

Heath found himself repeating the line unaccountably to himself, perhaps with that same sense of echoing tragedy which the music had wrought, as he passed on to his room.

And as he turned on the lights the corollary, "*Vanitas vanitatum*," insinuated itself cynically. He fell asleep, his empty arms flung wide, the dulled hunger of the earlier night stilling his being.

IX

He had a rude awakening. He sprang up from his pillows. What was it? What was it that was shaking like a rat in a lion's mouth the very foundations of the earth?

"Lucy!" he shouted madly, standing reeling in the middle of the room, and, "Lucy!" his bewildered consciousness reverberated, as through the cataclysmal din he made a dash for his clothes, and caught them amid the chasséing and courtesying furniture.

Through the uncanny silence of the corridors he reached the street. A blood red ball of a sun glared down at him through Jovian clouds. People half clad, shaken into a madness of dumbness, stood there with him.

"It was a horrible dream," thought Heath, transfixed like the rest. Was not the great city still standing? Was not—

Fire! boomed the bells.

"The little houses at the back!" someone shouted, running.

"Come!" A rough hand dragged him from his nightmare, pushing him along while they ran. "The city is on fire—we must help!" shouted the runner, as if all the world were deaf.

But the herculean arm he held flung

him far. Like a maniac he fled northward.

"I have a wife and child," he muttered dazedly as he sped over fallen chimneys and stones and debris, past crazily awry houses, past silly-looking, toylike, one-sided houses with their fronts fallen out. "I have a wife and child."

"Here, you! Lend a hand!" again someone shouted after him, and a woman sprang like a tiger at his shoulders. "My baby—crying—under the bricks! You strong—help—lift out—"

Wild-eyed, but with all his godlike strength thus impressed, he began his share in the work of rescue. And as he worked in the grime of fallen mortar and bricks, almost overpowered by the poison of escaping gas, he knew that the city was ablaze, and as he followed the voice of the leader, dragging out both living and dead from their hideous burial, a remnant of a verse, sung in boyhood, yelled crazily through his whirling senses:

Scotland's burning! Scotland's burning!
Look out! Look out!
Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire!
Pour on water! Pour on water . . .

"Have you got good hold of his legs?"

"Pour on water—pour on water!" shouted Heath in mad response.

"Water!" yelled the other with a howl of derision. "*There is no water!* Man, don't you know the mains are broken?"

His words spelled doom. Heath twisted himself in his half-recumbent position to reach the speaker's eye, and found his reason again. "What are we going to do?" he asked hoarsely.

"Let it burn," answered the other with tragic nonchalance, straightening himself, his hands on his hips. "Look!"

Heath's gaze followed the pointing finger. The southern landscape was a haze of flaming smoke!

"I have a wife and child," he uttered raucously, and turned, stumbling, to his goal.

Now, through a world of ghastly people, with eyes unseeing and ears unheeding everything but the clamor in his heart, the great, strong, begrimed

figure ran, strode, rushed on its way, only to slacken its pace when he realized at last that here in the north and west, here on the western heights, the dreadful convulsion past, the breath of the fire god not yet approached, only the face of things was a bit disfigured, only the reason of things momentarily lost.

The pageant of dumb figures, moving like a puppet show to the parks and open places, passed him as he reached Washington Street. A group of men, one of them in pale blue pajamas and overcoat, another in full evening dress from pumps to opera hat, struck him as being curiously endowed with life.

The man in the opera hat hailed him. "It's Heath—John Heath! What the devil—Hello, old man!" He shook him hard by the hand, talking ceaselessly, rapidly, nervously.

"Great shake, eh? Oh, yes, all safe on this block. Only one narrow escape: chimney fell through Hamilton's attic and almost killed the cook, but we got her out all right. I guess we're all more scared than hurt, eh? Fire's bad, though. I rushed out from the St. Francis in the first things I could lay hands on. Going back as soon as I—Too bad little Jack's across the bay. His mother, you know—"

"Is he across the bay?"

"Berkeley. Left yesterday afternoon with one of the maids, and your—Mrs. —she's been ill and is almost crazy with fear for his safety. All communication cut off, you know, and they say all the bay towns—"

"Can you find out for me where he is—the address, I mean?"

"Sure. I happen to know it. Stannard"—he nodded in the direction of the group he had left—"was just telling me how your—how she lost consciousness after—"

"Is she—"

"Better, oh yes. She'd be all right if only she had the boy, and, as I was about to say, Stannard was telling me that little Jack is over in Berkeley at Leland's and I'm—"

"Bob Leland's?"

"Yes."

"Is he still living on Dwight Way?"

"Same old house that—"

"Thank you, Merritt; I know the place. I'll fetch Jack. Will you—would you mind letting his mother know that I have gone for him? Tell her to wait; tell her—no need to mention who—tell her Jack's friend—the man across the street—will bring him back to her without fail." And he was gone, leaving Merritt gazing after him, open-mouthed.

"Well! There are dramas and dramas," said Merritt to himself, turning on his heel, "but this beats anything I've ever seen for queerness. Wonder if it's the last act!"

He walked down the street to the square white house set in its pleasant garden. The Chinaman at the gate accosted him.

"You hab some blekfus, Misser Mel-litt? You come see my lady—"

"No, Wing, I've had a bite. Can I speak to your lady?"

"She heap sick now. Jack closs bay; she not talk—"

"Call the maid, will you?"

"She! Oh, she no good. She lun 'way, take all her clo'es. Me, Wing, me take care my lady."

"Good boy, Wing! And now, Wing, you go in and tell her Mr. Merritt has something very good to tell her about Jack."

The lithe, white-smocked figure disappeared in a flash, only to reappear, a second later, followed by his mistress.

Her pallor was startling and a chill ran through Merritt as he took her hand. She raised her heavy eyes to him in mute questioning.

"It's all right, Lucy," he said, with the familiarity of lifelong acquaintance, his good-natured loquacity faltering in the face of her misery. "Somebody's gone for him. He said to wait; he'll bring him back without fail."

"Somebody?" she whispered. "Who, Harry?"

"Why—he said to say, 'Jack's friend, the man across the street.'"

A puzzled frown passed across her brow, but it faded almost instantly, only to leave her lips a-tremble with a smile of understanding.

"Jack's 'man across the street,'" she repeated faintly. Then, "Harry!"

He recoiled at her sudden scream, but she had caught him by his coat lapels, her beautiful, suffering face effulgent with an unearthly light.

"Harry," she commanded almost liltily, "was it—John?"

The man before her began to cry—and was not ashamed.

"Thank you, Harry," she said with an uncertain little reassuring laugh; "thank you very much, dear friend."

"It—it's all right, Lucy?"

"It's all right, Harry. He will come—they will come—and I will wait." Smiling, she patted him gently upon the shoulder, but he noticed that a continuous tremor was passing through her whole slender frame, making her quiver as an aspen quivers in still air.

But just at that moment the second severe shock came, and they, too, passed into the street, joining the ever increasing human current moving to the parks.

North, east, south, west, these terror-stricken human streams were flowing to the open places, for Loki, the fire god, was dancing in full panoply now, Loki, the lightsome, the *insouciant*, the mocking, heartless destroyer, with a flaming wreath for crown. And first, in the narrow places, in the poor places, more than half a hundred blazes joined forces and swept with the wind westward through the southern city, and brave firemen—bereft of their great chief-tain, who lay dying among the maimed, mercifully unconscious of his men's hopeless task—stood squeezing piteous drops of water from thirsty hose like dry tongues licking burning lips; stood with despairing axes, hewing and hacking away, till, overcome, they dropped, only to be replaced by thousands of brave volunteers, while the soldiers, with leveled guns, drove the hordes from their burning, toppling houses, only to see them fall in the street, paralyzed by terror and drink, and then to drive them on again by main force.

Rumors of all these horrors reached the woman standing with the crowds on the western heights; and men and

women, turning from that vision of doom below, gazed with wonder on her strange rapt figure there in the sun. For all that day the woman was in prayer, and her prayer, phoenixlike, rose like a soul out of ruins.

"Lucy, come with us. We have our machine and are going to San Mateo."

"Thank you, dear. I am waiting."

"Mother sent me to say that as soon as father can find a carriage or anything, we are going to take the boat for our ranch, and they want you to come with us. We may have to walk down to the wharf, though."

"Thank you, Ted. Tell mother she is very, very kind, but I can't go. I am waiting."

"Now, now, my dear, we are all together out at my house, and you know you can't get much nearer the ocean. We're all going for a swim, in case the fire gets ambitious and goes west, and we want you at our last party, of course."

"You are all so sweet, so good, and I thank you very much, but you know I am waiting, dear friend."

So through the long day the tender urging continued, but was forced to submit to a something final, they knew not what, which encompassed her like a sacred barrier.

And meanwhile a great city was being devastated while, with water everywhere encircling it, there was not a drop for use, and men who loved it, to whom it meant home and the pursuit of happiness, stood helpless. Only the roar of dynamite boomed a dull note of power above the widening doom.

The dreaded night came.

Wing, the Chinaman, brought rugs and blankets to pile round the slight figure sitting motionless, wrapped in a fleecy shawl, upon the steps. He brought pillows, bent upon contriving a bed for her out there in the vestibule whence she would not move.

"Wing fixee nice bed. You go sleep. Wing stay wake allee night."

"No, Wing, I'm not sleepy. It's a

warm night, and you are the best boy in the world. You go to sleep, Wing."

So the Chinaman huddled himself in the background and fell docilely asleep, and the woman sat gazing out at the awful glare in the southern and eastern skies, a dome of horror—for the wind had changed and now all Loki's forces had entwined arms, pirouetting from Market Street, ablaze from end to end, and Hayes Valley and Chinatown and so, together, marched a triumphant band, two miles wide, sweeping and whirring and purring and soaring and roaring, agile and invincible, unassailable, in terrible, godlike godlessness.

Out on the western heights steps passed regularly, monotonously, up and down the hushed streets, but the woman in prayer gave no start in their passing—it was only the wonderfully organized citizen patrol, moving on its self-assumed march, and at intervals through the watches of the night there rang out the stern, "Who goes there?" and the answer, quick and short, "Patrol!"

Something sharp touched her cheek. She turned, startled. It was a soldier's musket.

"Put out that light." He pointed to the single candle burning in the open hallway beyond.

She rose at once and obeyed.

The Chinaman stirred.

"Little Jack come home?" he cried, springing up.

"No, Wing, not yet. But he will. Lie still and sleep."

So night wore to morning, and when Thursday dawned, sweetly, serenely, it smiled upon a haggard, stricken city.

"San Francisco was." Such was the burden of the strangely hushed note of mourning, but stranger still was that robustious stiff upper lip that was noticed on the gray, hungry, unwashed faces of the men as they gazed upon the wholesale ruin of the night—for the great *renaissance* germinated already in their steady eyes.

And the fire still raged on, reaching out menacing arms to Van Ness Avenue, which gone, there would be no more praying. The back-firing began.

The heat was intense; black cinders fell like rain out to the far western limits.

A scorched scrap of paper floated down and settled like a dove upon Lucy's shoulder, as she stood on the pavement. She took it in her hand and read through the brown scorch two distinct lines:

Arise, shine, for thy day is coming and the glory of the Lord shall appear upon thee.

It was a leaflet from a prayer book, wafted over miles of blackened ruins to her seared soul. Was it a message? She thrust it into her bosom in wondering awe.

Just then a panting young woman passed, wheeling a Morris chair in which sat a little, smiling, pale old lady.

"Let me help you," said Lucy, and the young woman moved aside in surprised acquiescence as Lucy, with her wind-blown golden hair, put her hand to the chair back and pushed the unwieldy vehicle toward the congested Presidio gates.

For Van Ness Avenue had caught fire and the seaward flight had begun. Wagons of all descriptions passed her, piled high with portable effects and human freight, and drawn, for the most part, by human horses; boxes on skates, trunks on chair rollers, couches drawn by a rope, the living in hearses, fleeing figures carrying tenderly a parrot, a bird or a cat, an old, smiling, crazed woman holding lovingly in her arms a worn out broom—all added to the ghastliness of the exodus, the frantic flight from the flames.

There were those who said in simple seriousness afterwards: "I saw an angel that day. She spoke to me. She carried my load a block. She gave me a blanket. She gave me something to eat. She placed a chair for me and begged me to rest, for she said, 'You are about to become a mother.'"

So till evening fell, with wind-blown golden hair and eyes that smiled beyond, but with lips that seldom spoke, her hands and feet flew in the love tasks that fell her appointed way. Some said they had seen an angel, but some who had faith said it was God who walked the streets those days.

"Everybody has gone now, Lucy," said Harry Merritt sternly. "The guard has ordered everyone on the block to move on. You must come now."

"You know, Harry, he told me to wait."

"Yes. So did Casabianca's father. But we regard that as a joke nowadays. For God's sake, Lucy, come to your senses. I hate to say it, but something must have happened—to John, of course—"

"Yes, Harry. I have thought of everything that thought can think. But, beyond everything, I have—a knowledge that they will come to me—here."

Her strange beyond-sense faced him like a stone wall. He set his teeth over the violent oath that rose to his lips.

"I can't take you by force," he said fiercely. "And I can't stay with you, because I've got old Mrs. St. John in a carriage at the corner, but, by George, Lucy—"

"Please go, Harry—at once. I'll tell you what you can do for me. Are you going to the Presidio golf links?"

"Yes."

"They say there is some sort of registration in effect at the entrance gates. As soon as you are settled, leave word where you are, and provide a tent for us. I shall come to claim it."

He spoke no further word, but wrung her extended hands hard and left her alone.

But Wing, the Chinaman, hovered in the background.

And in the west evening came and gazed down, serene in rose gold beauty, upon the somber, molten agony moving slowly and awfully toward it.

A little star dared to peep forth.

And, turning the corner, there came a man carrying a child upon his shoulder.

Only the child's cry rang out shrill and sobbing through the awful quiet, as the mother arms went round him.

But above the golden head pressed safe against her heart, her eyes were locked with those of the man, standing at last before her, silent as of old.

Through her up-gazing he spoke, for

he saw that she was incapable of speech.

"I was delayed," he breathed heavily.

Her eyes caught at a great scar running down his temple to his cheek. "You are hurt," she uttered, and as her arms loosened from about the child she made a step toward him.

She felt him recoil. "It was nothing," he said roughly—"only the delay. I was thrown—falling stones—unconscious all day yesterday—that's why I am so late."

"And the carriage broke down near Telegraph Hill," cried the boy feverishly, "and he couldn't wait any more—the man across the street couldn't—and so he carried me all the way, muddie."

"Yes, darling." Her eyes clung to the child. "I know—he would do just that. John—I—thank God."

He raised a battered hat.

"What can I do for you?" he asked the next moment.

"We must move on. Everybody has gone. There is Wing with blankets and all the food—"

"Hello, Wing!"

The child and the Chinaman were shaking hands mightily.

In the distance the dynamite boomed.

"Let us go," she said, and held out her hand toward the child and the Chinaman. But her eyes were on John Heath.

"Do you need me?" he asked harshly.

"I think so—yes. If you can come." She was very pale, but her eye did not falter.

"Where is—your husband?"

And now the face he looked upon, save for the eyes which gazed in horror into his, was quite without life.

"You—" she dragged forth presently, "you—I have no—husband, John."

"Will Fleming!" he hurled at her.

Her lip lifted in a brooding smile of understanding. She shook her head in disclaimer. "No," she breathed, rather than said.

A cold moisture sprang out upon John Heath's tortured brow.

"Quick!" he said. "We waste time. You are alone?"

"Only Jack, always only Jack."

He did not understand, but at her word he turned like one invested with sudden command, and marshaled them before him. The house was locked, and they joined the rear guard of fugitives, the child and the Chinaman in the lead talking excitedly, the man and woman following closely, walking silent side by side, yet apart.

A glorious night had fallen by the time they entered the city of tents, formed in desperate haste on the grassy plain among the wide groves of eucalyptus and fir. Many, tentless, moved hither and yon, singularly quiet, providing shelter and comfort for a night in the open with what means they had, hanging their bird cages in the trees, like the mourners of old by the waters of Babylon. A sort of gipsy use and wont seemed to imbue all, as if in their hour of need they had reverted to a distant birthright. Faint lights glimmered opalescently through the tents, throwing into somber relief the tall, dark, heaven-pointing trees guarding the homeless heads at rest beneath their quiet strength. Caravans great and small arrived, depositing their burdens, and departed like moving dream pictures, while over all brooded the beautiful, pitying night with its great crimson wound glaring widely on its breast.

Through the foresight of Harry Merritt, John Heath found a tent awaiting them, and, Lucy choosing the spot—a knoll somewhat removed from the more closely packed levels—set it up with Wing's assistance. Quickly and quietly they moved about, Lucy allotting the blankets according to the ground space, the Chinaman finally preparing his spirit lamp for the coffee to be made when John would have returned with the water from the one flowing hydrant adjacent to the links. But the water line was long, and Jack fell asleep in his blanket, his mother's arm about him, long before he returned.

Once, in the interim, a girl's voice broke the silence softly.

"Any children here?" she called through the opening, the question sounding like a bird's low song.

Lucy came to her. "A little boy of six," she said swiftly. "Why?"

"I have a pitcher of milk for the kiddies. He's entitled to his share."

The cup was passed from hand to hand, the weary little head raised, the comforting drink given and, as the child dropped off to sleep instantly, the cup was returned.

"Dear," breathed the mother softly.

"Oh!" laughed the girl with a gulp, and passed on.

When John returned, Lucy had disappeared. The Chinaman was squatting like an idol before the tent; the child within slept on.

"Where is—she?" he asked briefly—he had no other appellative at command—as he handed him the pitcher of water.

"She lun help lady down there get baby. Baby come heap too klick. She come back soon. I go make coffee."

Heath was standing, sentinel fashion, at the tent door when, fifteen minutes later, she came hurrying over the stubble. Her head was uplifted, but he noticed that the spring had gone from her step.

"It's a boy," she said simply as she reached him and, to his consternation, she burst into tears. It was only for a moment, but the moment was agony to John Heath standing before her with strong, aching arms.

"Don't cry," he said helplessly.

She recovered herself almost instantly. "So brave," she said elliptically. "And it's going to be all right. Her sister is with her. Is Jack asleep? Is supper ready? You'll have a cup of coffee with me, John?"

"Yes. I believe I need it," he said directly.

And presently they were drinking the hot coffee and eating the dry sandwiches Wing passed out to them where they sat on the grass, and the stress of the common calamity, the thousands sleeping in the open about them, the cinders flying and falling in sinister

silence upon their heads and garments, the regular detonation of the exploding dynamite afar off, the glaring eye of the sky above and beyond them, made even their strange nearness and supping together almost a commonplace.

But they did not linger. He rose as Wing took his cup.

"Where are you going?" she asked quickly, standing beside him.

"To town. The fire must be got under control soon—and I want to be there."

They spoke in undertones.

"But you are so tired," she ventured gently.

"Am I?" He pushed his hat back, passing his hand over his eyes. "Well, good-bye. I—want to see you again—about Jack."

"Jack, yes—tonight, John?" Her face, looking up at him through the gloom, gleamed white.

He decided quickly. "Tonight—yes. There may be no tomorrow—no chance, I mean."

"Why not now?"

"No, no," he muttered, suddenly incoherent. "Presently. I'll be back."

"I will wait," she said easily, as if accustomed to the refrain.

He turned, but, hesitating, came back. "You had better turn in and sleep. I may be gone a couple of hours."

"Yes," she said docilely. "I will bring my blanket out here. It is so warm and peaceful."

Just then, through the stillness, the bugler's "taps" resounded from the Presidio in all its sweet finality. They stood listening. Then he went.

Down through the great trees the stars smiled tremblingly into the wide, sleepless brown eyes upturned to them as Lucy lay waiting. Now and then a pet canary chirped in its cage. Men passed her with news of the progress of the fire, always delivered with that cheery forbearance which knew no surrender.

"Spreckels has ordered his palace to be blown up," came the passing word, bringing to Lucy, with poignant vividness, that picture of devastation, the

"fifty Pompeiis in ruins," as John had succinctly summarized the scenes through which he and Jack had passed that day.

Dimly she realized that the reverberations of the dynamiting were further apart, that the glare in the south and east had diminished. A great hope took her.

She sat up, her hair falling unheeded about her, as the awful tension fell from her like the world burden from frail shoulders.

In the gloom she discerned a tall figure standing motionless a few feet away. An icy hand seemed to pass over her from head to feet and, for the space of a second, she could not move. She essayed to speak, and finally the sound came.

"John."

He heard the whisper and came slowly toward her.

"The fire is under control," he announced, looking down at her.

She clasped her hands, her fingers interlacing in mute thanksgiving. "Yes," she breathed, and she knew that with this verbal putting away of that public dread, at last they found themselves face to face.

She threw back the blanket and stood up, gathering her hair together as it fell in shimmering beauty about her, and braiding it into a long, heavy plait while she spoke.

"You have something to say to me," she murmured unevenly.

"Yes."

"Wait a minute." Her fingers flew in and out of the thick strands until, completed, she flung the heavy braid over her shoulder. "Will you come?"

He followed a few yards beyond to a clump of trees under which the slender figure stood abruptly still. He came to a standstill a hand's breadth from her. There was no sound, no motion near them; the houseless thousands here in the open, reprieved from death, slept now in deep exhaustion.

Only these two, motionless under the heaven-pointing trees, had come, as if keeping tryst, to this primeval-

seeming meeting place, as to their last earthly judgment.

But neither spoke.

At length the man found words. "Are you cold?" he questioned quietly.

It was so strange, so different from what she had expected! She could not speak; she could not move. She stood still, listening.

"Lucy," he essayed hoarsely. "Oh, Lucy, my love!"

His hand caught at an extended branch of the tree and, bending his great frame to it, he buried his face in his arm.

She moved till she stood close beside him, not touching him—waiting.

He felt her nearness, and straightened. Then, suddenly, fiercely, he put out both hands to her, thrust his fingers through the soft hair about her temples and turned her face up, up, till it almost touched his. His eyes devoured her.

"Love!" he whispered again through his teeth. "Love!" It was the one word he knew.

In the agony of his passion, she closed her eyes as if in pain. But, having found expression for that which had overcome all other thought and remembrance, he as suddenly thrust her from him.

"Now," he commanded roughly.

"Yes," she responded faintly. She felt curiously weak, curiously light. "Ask me, please. I don't know where to begin."

"Don't you see I can't? Don't you know what I must know—first?" He spoke in whispered gruffness.

"About—"

"Yes—that man."

"Will Fleming?"

"Ye-es."

"What do you want to know?"

"My God! How do I know? Where is he?"

"I do not know. Somewhere in Europe, I think."

"You think?"

"Yes."

"You do not know?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because I chose it so."

"Why?"

"Because it was best."

"Best for whom?"

"For both of us."

"You love him?"

He received no answer. After a pause, he spoke more deliberately. "You said something when I brought Jack home—that you were alone—that it had always been only Jack. Then, you—did not marry him?"

"No."

"Why not?"

Again he received no answer.

He resumed more quietly. "But you got—the divorce. I read the announcement."

"Yes."

"Why, then—a divorce?"

"Because—you—you—suggested it by going away as you did. And he—persuaded me that that—was—what you wished—and—"

"And you loved him."

Again there was no response.

"Answer me."

"Yes."

He laughed a bitter, low laugh. Again the earth seemed to rock beneath him, about him, but he persisted in his own torture. "I know. I heard you together on the steps that night. Well? You had the divorce. You loved him. Why didn't you marry him?" The question came harshly, brutally.

"Because—when it came to it—I found—"

"Go on. What did you find? He didn't dare—"

She raised her humble head higher, raised her hand, quelling him. "Hush. Not even you have loved me more truly, more honorably than did—he. But that is ended." She spoke with the dignity of a superb reticence. It created a poignant pause. Then, because she knew that she had precipitated the mental battle swaying the man before her into silence, she made a supreme effort to have done.

"You forget," she said gently, "who I am."

"Who—"

"I will try to put it in words; shall I?"

"It is all confusion to me. I seem to grasp nothing clearly. After you got the divorce—loving him—why—"

"There! Let me begin there and try to make you understand. I submitted—in a daze—to the divorce; I was physically overwrought, you know. Then, we—I decided to close up the house and take Jack and follow him to New York, whither he had preceded me by a week. We were to be married upon my arrival."

He stood rigid while she, pressing her hands to her temples, strove to make herself understood.

"He came for me at the hotel. When I saw him I—knew."

"Knew what?" The raucous whisper was barely intelligible in its eagerness.

She turned partly from him, looking beyond. "I knew that I was still married—to you." She spoke in steady quietude.

"The divorce—"

"Was legal. A correct social procedure. It had nothing to do with the individual—with me."

He waited questioningly.

"I am not a common woman."

His whole attitude was a protest.

"I am not—a *cheap* woman."

He was beginning to comprehend.

"I could not—belong—to two men—at once."

"But we—you were no longer married to me."

"You forget. The years had married me—indissolubly—to you, John."

"Ah!"

"I am not—polyandric."

He understood, and bent his head.

"Centuries of Puritanic observance of the marriage bond by my ancestors have made it sacred to me. It has become to me an intuitive article of faith. I am trying to analyze for you—my recoil. I find it very difficult. Are you beginning to understand?"

"I think so."

"Thank you. Then, perhaps, you can realize how—when the moment came for me—to repudiate all my inherited instincts, I saw that such a thing was impossible without—killing

—something within my very roots,
stronger than—"

"Your love for him?"

"Yes."

"And that was—"

"My ideal of purity."

"Yours only."

"The ideal of all honorable women.
It is a simple thing: I belonged to you.
The day I married you I gave myself
to you forever—my thoughts, my
honor, my devotion."

"But not—your love."

"Is not that a—sort of love, John?"
She said it very simply, wistfully
pleading.

"Ah, God!" he murmured brokenly,
covering his face with his hands.

"I think it is a very sweet love," her
grave, tired voice went on quietly.
"Something a man may trust forever
and ever, dear."

She stated it so unequivocally, so
robbed of all emotion, yet, withal, with
such indomitable strength, it quieted
him strangely.

He took off his hat, baring his up-
lifted brow to the faint breeze stirring
the high branches, and drew a long,
deep breath.

A canary in its cage in a nearby tree
broke into ecstatic caroling. A little
hesitating step, crushing the stubble,
drew toward them.

"Muddie!" came the frightened,
sleepy child's call.

She ran to him and sank on her knees
at once before him, holding him close
in her arms.

"I wanted you," he complained,
rubbing his cheek accusingly against
hers. "I was looking all over for
you."

"Mother was right here, Jack."

"Muddie, is that the man across the
street under the trees?"

"Yes, love."

"Why is he looking up at the
sky?"

"I think he is thanking God that the
fire is out, Jack."

"Is the fire out?"

"Dying, dear—almost dead."

"Muddie, why do the birds sing so in
the night?"

"They see a light down there in the
sky and think it is the dawn," said Lucy
Heath.

And the child turned up his face
where his mother pointed.



RECESSIONAL

By ARTHUR POWELL

A FAR, faint sound of silver bells
Falls slumb'rously into the sea;
In bosky aisles and hollow dells
The dusks foregather silently.

*A fluttering heart's allayed alarms,
A ship that sailed out long ago,
A sinking into love's dear arms
Close held from outer woe.*

A white wing drips with virgin gold;
The west burns out; the daylight dies;
Life's last rich crimson bead is told—
Peace guards the corse in Death's dark guise.

RANDOM NOTES FROM MY LOG BOOK

By TOM MASSON

PARIS

PARIS—the place where the sheath gowns come from—has been known for some years as the married man's heaven. Being short on morals and long on lingerie, its reputation has spread through every diocese in America.

Paris is the guardian angel of vice, and keeps it dressed up in the latest styles and sees that its manners do not falter or decay.

It has been said that all good Americans go to Paris when they die. If they go beforehand they do not carry away their goodness with them.

Paris, like virtue, has its own reward. It takes away more good American money every year than any other city.

Paris can be reached by steamer, automobile, railway or flying machine. Before entering the city, check your wife at any of the numerous stations on the outskirts provided for that purpose. If you go by flying machine, hand her a parachute at Rouen.

Paris has been the resort of many famous people—among others Louis XIV, the Emperor Napoleon and Mabel Gilman.

The art galleries of Paris are famous. Every American should pass an hour or so in them, before devoting the rest of his three weeks' stay to the living pictures.

IRELAND

IRELAND is peopled by servant girls and ward heelers, and is popularly

known as the incubator of American politics. It supplies England with its wit and humor and produces poets, soldiers and statesmen for general distribution. Its trade mark is the Blarney stone. About the only thing it lacks is stability and snakes. Without it we should be able to elect our own Presidents every four years.

Ireland has made history for every other nation but itself. It has drawn every Cork but its own.

Every attempt to drive the Celts out of Ireland, however, has been unsuccessful. They have resisted St. Patrick, numerous famines, the English Parliament and the demands of time. For generations it has subsisted on potatoes and a sense of humor, there being no nourishment in potatoes to speak of.

Although Ireland is near England, it has never been able to get next to her. Home Rule was born there, but never reached its majority.

The Irishman and the Jew have never been conquered. The only difference between them is that the Jew never had a country of his own. Now they divide America between them.

The Irishman never goes back on a friend, a political job or a bottle of whiskey. He has never been hopeless because he has never taken his immorality seriously.

Ireland is never so much at home as when it is abroad. Without it Rome would be lonesome and New York too good to be true.

MID-SEA MADNESS

By FLORIDA PIER

THE THIRD DAY OUT

THE Broker had tramped his mile around the deck and now felt a distinct inclination to puff. No one knew that he had intended to do a mile when he started, and it would have been perfectly easy to sit down after the second round except for that irritating figure in green which so persistently swung a quarter of a boat's length ahead. She had been going along with equal impetus when he first started. She showed no signs of strolling or, even better, stopping, now that a commendable mile had been done. She was most disturbing, and the Broker plodded on, disliking her more every step she took.

It being the third day out, people had ceased looking at one another with the furtive suspicion of the first day and the blank oblivion of the second. They had apparently made up their minds that not more than a half-dozen or so of the passengers were really dangerous, and though it would be unwise to encourage anyone, an infinitesimal bow to the most distinguished could do no harm. The Broker had as yet not been included in any of these vague salutations, and he was excessively bored. He had never done so little in his life and it made him restive. He felt compelled to move, yet objected to frankly exercising. Walking had been proven an obnoxious occupation, and he glowered at the figure in green. Why couldn't the woman stop? He closed his teeth on a desire to shout: "I'm not going to put up with this much longer. You've got to sit down!" Instead, she started on another lap and

the Broker's knees experienced a slight collapse. Just then he was stopped by a soft "I beg your pardon" at his side, and looking down he saw a slender young woman trying vainly to tuck her rug under her feet.

"I'm very sorry," she chirped, "but would you mind—I can't seem to manage it."

The Broker did not in the least mind. It raised his opinion of shipboard life and his relief at standing still was great. He wondered if it was now the proper thing to remark on the beauty of the morning. He decided it was worth trying and his suggestion was received amiably. The morning was indeed beautiful and the sea delightfully calm. Yes, wasn't the ship steady! They quite glowed at the coincidence of their having agreed on these three points. The young woman's eyes wandered to the vacant chair beside her, then she smiled vaguely and looked blamelessly blank. The Broker asked for permission to sit. It was granted with an innocent surprise and the Woman in Green at that moment swung by. The Broker could have shaken her. What possessed her to flaunt her energy, her self-reliant stride in the face of comfortably seated people? It was hardly well bred. He turned to the woman beside him with a flurry of admiration. She glanced up at him with gentle, languid eyes. "Shipboard is a wonderful place to rest, isn't it?" she said.

"Indeed it is; that's what I came for."

"And I, too. Is this your first trip?"

"Yes; I've always meant to come before, but this is the first spring I have

ever had the time. I really ought not to have left my business now."

"Men are so busy."

The Broker agreed with her and found her conversation soothing. She seemed sensible and he liked her name, which he could read on the card just beside her hat—"Miss Judd." Really a very nice name. He beamed, and though she did not know it he was silently, unconsciously, congratulating her on her repose. He thought the seated position very graceful.

"It is quite dangerous to walk when the decks are so wet, don't you think?"

"I should say so." He was vehement, and yet, as he felt she would have believed him if he had said that it was perfectly safe, his eyes signaled a genial approval. "You don't play shuffleboard, I suppose?" He was leaning back now and had taken on all the air of a fixture at her side.

"Oh, no, I don't know how, and it looks most awfully difficult."

"We will have to teach each other. What do you say to finding a quiet corner this afternoon and getting our hand in? I don't believe it's really difficult."

"Oh, shall we—if you wouldn't mind my making mistakes. I—" Again the Woman in Green passed, and this time the Broker was forced to notice a distinct smile of amusement on her lips. She had taken in his settled position in the chair, and the biting of her lip was surely to prevent a consequent laugh. With an enraged scramble the Broker rose, mumbled a leave-taking and strode after the Woman in Green. As she ducked into the saloon door she glanced behind, and this time she laughed frankly. The Broker threw his principles to the wind, followed her into the writing room and there, blinking a little in the sudden gloom, leaned over the desk at which she had just seated herself and demanded with suppressed savagery: "May I talk to you?"

The Woman in Green looked at him a moment—just long enough to reduce him to a state of uncertainty, whence he would gladly have fled. "But you

are talking to me now," she said. "If you would rather do it more comfortably, you may sit down on the other side of the desk. These *vis-à-vis* things are very disconcerting. I dislike a scratching pen that seems to echo mine. It will be very nice to have you prevent that by talking." She arranged some letter paper, chose her pen and looked across at the Broker, seated, unhappily conscious that she was about to write. "This is the third day out, is it not?"

"I'm sure I don't know." It was only perversity on the Broker's part that made him say so.

"Ah, but you must know. We are doing all the third day things. One never needs a calendar on shipboard. One can always tell what day it is by a glance at the other passengers or—at oneself."

The Broker felt his eyes grow hot. He would never cross again for the first time. This woman's experience was almost unfeminine. "What sort of things do they do?" He managed even this with difficulty.

"Well, the women can't quite manage to tuck up their rugs themselves. Some attentive man does it for them. Then he sits down in the vacant chair beside them. There always is a vacant chair beside them. They both remark that the sea is calm or otherwise, as it happens to be, and after that the man offers to teach her how to play shuffleboard. That's about the way it is, don't you think? Or perhaps you can add something from your own observations."

The Broker stared at her speechless. Something was happening to his face. It was a novel something and added to his discomfort. He looked in a nearby mirror. He was blushing. The thing had never happened before and he blamed it entirely on the Woman in Green.

"If you don't feel like talking," she said, "perhaps you would like to write. One also writes on the third day—notes of thanks, you know, for the flowers and things sent to the steamer." And she smiled down at the roses tucked into her jacket.

"What does one do on the second and first day?" The Broker felt great relief at hearing his own voice; he had begun to fear he never should find it again.

"Oh, didn't you notice? One sleeps, scowls at the ridiculous amount of water lying about and intimates to the other passengers that one is an excessively exclusive person." Her pen was scratching busily and it irritated the Broker.

"I did not see you sleeping the first and second day." The moment he had said this he had an exaggerated fear that it was impertinent. He waited anxiously for her reply.

"Ah, but that was eccentricity on my part. I do not like to have people look at me when I am asleep, and so I perform such little offices in my state-room. Besides, I never sleep until the fourth day. I shall not appear at all tomorrow. Do you mind not talking now? I really *must* finish my note."

"But I have not been talking. I—"

"No? Then I've been the one. I frequently make that mistake. It is for that reason I fancy people say such amusing things. I forget I say them myself." She bent her head very low over the desk and her pen scratched obtrusively.

The Broker rose. "I'm hoping you will decide to appear tomorrow, after all." Then he bowed and walked away.

The Woman in Green raised a pink face and laughed at his retreating back. "If you'd wake up a bit yourself," she murmured, "I might not sleep at all."

THE FOURTH DAY OUT

The Woman in Green stood by the rail holding on to a small toque. Her aunt—a little woman with a perpetually surprised brow and a habit of pursing her lips, which said to the world at large: "I am entirely out of sympathy with this; I had nothing whatever to do with its happening, but you will kindly have the manners not

to criticize"—was gazing distressedly at the toque in question.

"My dear Winifred," she remonstrated, "it's fully three years since those hats have been worn. I do think you might not be three years behind the styles."

"Auntie, it's a very nice toque. They will be worn again in five years or so. Why not say I am five years ahead of the style? One is quite as true as the other, and the latter is much more complimentary."

"Winifred, I really wish you wouldn't talk so."

"But, my very dear little relative, you know as well as I do that the hat is becoming, as well as being an ideal shape for the steamer. Why will you exercise yourself?"

"But, Winifred, think of looking well in a hat that's three years behind the times! No one else would."

"Auntie, come and walk; these great questions are beyond you." They started off, the little woman pattering at Winifred's side. Suddenly she stopped. "Winifred, you're limping!"

"Come along, auntie; I know it."

A hurried little skip brought her again alongside her niece. "But what makes you limp? Have you turned your ankle?"

"No."

"But, Winifred, what is the matter?"

"This is a fictitious limp, auntie, designed as discipline for you, who take appearances too seriously. Come on—it won't last long. I'll only do it once around."

"But, Winifred, I won't walk with you." She was pattering madly to keep up.

"Very well, then; the limp will be much more prominent. You shield me somewhat now, you see."

"Oh, Winifred, do stop it; it's such a grotesque limp."

"All the better discipline. There's not much choice in limps. If that broker intends to love me he must love my limp."

"But, Winifred, the man doesn't love you, and you don't limp."

"Both are purely accidental. Either

may happen; it's as well to be prepared." Here they came to a sheltered spot. Winifred stopped, hugged her little aunt violently and sank onto a bench. "It's rather tiring on deck. I wish I'd stayed in bed, after all."

"Winifred, you act perfectly insane. What did you mean by saying that broker must love you?"

"Nothing. I never mean anything. Do go and walk some more. I never shall forgive you for making me get up." And she yawned prodigiously.

Her aunt took a few steps, hesitated, and returned to her questioning. "What did you mean? Do you think that man is going to fall in love with you?"

"Auntie, questions are such indecent things. They let light in. Not half as much as answers though. You see for yourself that I must keep silent."

"Oh, Winifred, I wish you would tell me."

"Dear auntie, haven't you a grain of anything? If a woman is married a man tells her of his *past* love affair—on shipboard, I mean. I'm not married, so he will tell me of his love for *me*."

"When—today?"

"Of course not. It always happens the fifth day out. It isn't his fault; it's the idleness and the exaggerated amount of water. They get on his nerves and he proposes to the nearest female."

"Why, Winifred, will you accept him?"

"Auntie, have you no modesty? No one ever accepts anyone on shipboard, unless one is traveling second class. I don't know what the etiquette is there."

"Winifred, how you do talk! He certainly is very good-looking."

"Auntie, your appraising eye throws a vulgar light on my lightest words. Plea—se, walk." The little woman started off decisively this time, more because she was vexed than satisfied. Winifred shook off the impression of their chat and frowned to herself. "How I do talk, to be sure!" She

closed her eyes. The wind blew a lock of hair across them. She tucked it under her hat and glanced down the deck. The Broker was wandering along searching for someone. She jumped up, making for the nearest door. A book she had forgotten fell from her lap, its leaves fluttering. She chased the scurrying thing along the deck and stopped for it as the Broker victoriously caught it.

"Then this is not the fourth day out?" he queried, keeping the book.

"Ah, yes, but it is. I am going down now for my belated sleep." She held out her hand for the crumpled volume.

"But it is only nine, and there is nothing to be done until eleven tonight. Then one can go to bed. Won't you please stay up just a little while?" The Broker's distress was genuine.

"I'm sure there are a lot of rugs untucked; can't you find them?"

A slow smile broke on the man's face. He flourished an unlighted cigar feebly. His lips moved, but the flourish was as far as he got.

Winifred scolded silently. "Does he fancy waving a cigar is repartee?"

"Won't you sit down? It's very early to walk." The Broker gave the impression that he missed the support of a rolltop desk. She saw his need and chimed: "But this is the very time to walk. Come, let's go up on the hurricane deck, where we can feel the wind." She sent him up the companionway first, and he gave her a hand that expressed nothing more definite than obedience. They tramped the deck, crushing cinders under their feet and getting the hot air from the engine room unpleasantly in their faces. They crossed to the other side.

A famous author lay curled on a rug, looking a little disheveled, and a nondescript woman sat flatly, her back braced, taking with more determination than enjoyment a sun bath. The two passed her and Winifred gave a trill of horror. "Why will they do it?" she whispered excitedly. "That type of woman always feels that if she is distantly connected to a motor car

or a boat it gives her full permission to look a fright. A blue veil made to look a nightcap, ugh! Where do they get their mad ideas? Sport is too delightful ever to be spoiled by hideous participators."

The Broker looked pleased. "Ah, then, you are not so advanced as to think women have a right to be ugly?"

The Woman in Green turned on him. "I advanced? What an unpleasant idea! I think that is the most uncomplimentary thing that has ever been said to me. Are you by any chance comparing me with some belated woman who still expresses herself in purrs? By no other standard am I advanced."

The Broker laughed. "I beg your pardon. You see, I work rather hard and my friends are always advising me to take the latest cure. When I find myself braced against my will, feeling stimulated but pestered, I always think the cure is surely the latest discovery, the most advanced thing possible." They walked half a dozen steps in silence, both looking at the deck, then the Captain left the bridge and spoke to the Woman in Green. The Broker meekly joined the man who sat next him at table, and when he looked about his late companion had gone. She had taken a bad impression of him with her. She had gone off without passing judgment on his last remark.

If she had even reprimanded him for it he would not now feel the thing left so heavily on his hands. Her not answering plunged him into uncertainty. Had he made an asinine remark? Of course he had. Well, he wouldn't have if he had been talking to Miss Judd; yet how could he convince the Woman in Green of that? She was advanced, unspeakably so. It was absurd of her to pretend she was not. That was advanced in itself. He wished she would appear again. He saw her cringe under his fresh accusation of deplorable, criminal advance. He held the words ready to hurl at her—and at luncheon she was nowhere to be seen. The food was flat in con-

sequence and he smoked too much afterwards. This was directly attributable to the Woman in Green, and his wrath toward her grew. Her type was not going to take—he was convinced of that. She could sail along with her sails full now, but the old-fashioned woman was the one that the world always had liked and always would. He took a seat where he could watch the stairs. His impatience to let her see that she was unattractive to him made him regard that silly function tea as a Godsend. She would surely come up for that. She was just the kind of woman that talked fast and airily across a tea table, only to end by asking if his cup bothered him. This, when his one thought was where to put it while he throttled her!

A stupid watching of the stairs was no longer possible to him, and he strolled down the deck. A sheltered corner held her ensconced behind a tea basket, her aunt and three acquaintances surrounding her. One of them was Miss Judd. The Broker descended to the smoking room, stepping on a cup that someone had put on the deck. It was the first pleasant thing that had happened that day. The Broker smiled, a little violently, and when he was firmly settled on a hot divan realized that there was no reason why he should not have asked her for tea. She would have had to give it him.

THE FIFTH DAY OUT

The sea was a wild olive green, with black shadows and long vivid combs. The sky tossed and tore itself into tattered clouds that collided and melted and reflected the sea. The boat pitched with a regularity that somehow did not permit one to become accustomed to the action of the deck. It was easy to understand why it fell from under you, but there seemed no method about its coming up and hitting the soles of feet perfectly willing to go down and meet it. The Broker was busy in an effort to discover what the system was, and as he had difficulty in finding one he

was getting in a good deal of exercise. His breakfast had been early and hurried. He had awakened to find a stateroom a risky indulgence. Apparently others had discovered it too late, as there were not a dozen people on deck. Last evening had been most agreeable. Miss Judd and he had found many interests in common. As they were probably possessed by everyone else under heaven, this was not surprising. The full meaning of the term, "interests in common," did not occur to the Broker. Miss Judd was a most sympathetic young woman. She was traveling alone. The Broker had offered to see that she arrived in London safely. He hoped they might meet in Paris. He rather wondered how she would cross the Channel without him. There had been a furtive moon, and in walking Miss Judd had taken his arm with a hesitating trust. He particularly liked the way she had done it. A charming custom it was. There was something so instinctively right about it. He walked with a stuffy straightness at the mere recollection of the support he had given her.

The deck steward poked out a bustling head, and a familiar brown rug caught the Broker's eye. He hurried forward. Miss Judd was coming on deck. It was surprising what a number of things she was having carried. He shared them with the steward and propelled the rather unsteady lady toward her chair. He explained his system for playing the rising and falling of the deck and she looked blank. Why had he not saved it for the Woman in Green? He wondered, now that she had come into his mind, if she were ill. For an awful moment he hoped she was; then he felt seriously concerned about her and thought of inquiring of the steward. Not that it was any affair of his. He did not expect to see much more of her during the trip. She was not always gracious in her manner and, besides, Miss Judd was traveling alone and needed attention. He gave it her generously. She was wrapped, propped, swathed, tucked

and turned. She smiled elaborately through the process and it sat oddly on her extremely limp face. When there seemed nothing more to be done her head fell back and the corners of her mouth collapsed. The deck steward had gone off with his professional, obsequious hurry, and the Broker glanced anxiously at Miss Judd. He had a hazy fear that she might disintegrate. He banished the thought quickly from his mind, its being within a few feet of her was too dangerous. In her weak condition even that might be sufficient to start her off.

"Shan't I go away and let you sleep?" The Broker spoke softly so as not to jar her.

"Sleep, when I have you to talk to? Of course not!" Coming from her slightly yellow lips the remark was unseemly. It only struck the Broker as pathetic. He was all she had. He would sit by her till Doomsday. It was possible that she ought to be made to eat. He would do his best.

"Mayn't I bring you something? It would really do you good—a chop for instance, not too much cooked." Miss Judd gave a complete turn, rugs and all, and lay still. The Broker was alarmed. "That was a break, I'm afraid; won't you pardon me." He leaned toward her and was startled to find one slender hand outside the rug, lying rather near him. He took it. The thing had to be put to some use, and once having taken it on, there was nothing for him to do but hold it firmly and say, "Won't you forgive me the chop, or, at least, its not being sufficiently cooked?" As Miss Judd turned, he had just time to see an end of an arch eyebrow; the two were enveloped in a whirlwind of resuscitating ministrations. The Woman in Green stood over them issuing orders. Miss Judd was dispatched to a windless passageway where she could not see the ocean. A tiny phial of pellets was placed in her hand. The Doctor stopped and begged to talk to her. At the end of ten minutes she was well out of the way, having been ordered not to move. Winifred's aunt was about to

read to her, and Winifred lay in Miss Judd's chair, breathing relievedly and scowling at the Broker, who stood near, still a little confused.

"It was nice of you to rescue her," he said, and they both burst into peals of postponed laughter. When the Woman in Green stopped, small bubbles of amusement continuing to break in her voice, she shook her head crossly and exclaimed: "But it was you that I rescued, from mid-sea madness. Did no one tell you that it was a thing to be avoided?"

"No," he shook his head ruefully; "I'm just beginning to realize that it exists."

"Beginning? You should be well over it. You've had your attack; it has been pointed out to you. You surely won't feel it again." This had to be said very seriously indeed, as it was so obviously untrue.

"You are quite sure it is not still before me? There isn't a doubt in your mind but that was it?"

"Doubt? Do you realize that it is not yet nine o'clock, and that you were talking feelingly of an underdone chop—not to mention another detail that I will—well, have the grace not to mention."

The Broker felt at a disadvantage. How she had managed to put him there he did not know, but there he was. The only thing that occupied his mind—as a matter of fact, it raced through it with echoes repeating themselves in his vacant wonder—was: how does she make me feel such a fool? So that, with a wholly unexpected directness, was what he said. She received it queerly. She looked embarrassed, young and the least bit ashamed. The Broker experienced a sharp desire to dance. In his triumphant heart he shouted: "She's flabbergasted, she is, and I've done it!" Then she narrowed her eyes and smiled. "It may have been your support which pulled me through the very difficult performance. You'd better sit down; I'm not going to move from here all day."

The Broker sat hurriedly, almost as though he did not wish to miss a mo-

ment of her day. "But the meals," he reminded her, "the countless number of them—what are you going to do about those?"

"Have them all here—even the broth. I've spent my life trying to escape shipboard broth. I've evaded it with strategy. I've fled from it in full retreat. Today I'm going to face it. You will see me publicly drink it," and she laughed deliciously, which somehow made his seeing her drink the broth a valuable concession. He laughed too, he did not quite know why, but it may have been that for the moment he felt a little less a fool. A fleeting boldness seized him. "I feel it would be a capital way to begin the day if you were to tell me your name; do you mind?"

"Of course not, but I supposed you knew it; you must have been calling me something."

"Oh, yes, I've been calling you 'That Woman in Green.'"

She laughed again. "I don't mind 'Woman in Green,' but why 'That Woman in Green'? It sounds vindictive, as though you had said it through clenched teeth."

"I did, as a matter of fact. You walked so persistently. I hate walking, and yet I couldn't sit down comfortably until I'd caught up with you. As you never stopped going, I never sat down, and that naturally made me very vindictive." She made a laughing movement to rise. "Don't you dare! You will pardon my taking command, but you are not to get up." She covered her face with her hands. "Why do you do that?" The Broker was sitting on the edge of his chair with interest.

"I was trying to conceal my natural feminine delight at being bullied."

"Ah, please! Don't make me feel absurd any more."

She flung a glance to heaven and gave a little chuckle. "I will tell you my name; it will put the conversation on a steady, irreproachable footing, and, besides, there is nothing safer than personalities. You may also tell me yours. I do not know it."

The Broker grinned. "I thought personalities were anything but safe."

"Oh, don't say that, or I shall have to put you in a different class. You see, personalities are encouraged only in the top and bottom of the conversational world. At the bottom they deal in nothing but the baldest personalities, sometimes a little smeared with expletives. In everything between the top and the bottom personalities are abjured, fled from. They are considered unduly intoxicating, and so bad form. The very severity of the rules against them, however, makes it a point of honor that one break them. At the top personalities are delighted in, considered much safer than opinions, and if one doesn't talk about oneself who is going to give the world accurate information on the subject? So apparently personalities are the only amusing things anywhere. You will forgive my not having been sure of it in the beginning. The idea had only just occurred to me and it is still not yet nine o'clock." At the end of this chatter she rippled into a laugh, looked at the Broker and turned mock serious. "Don't do it," she pleaded. "You are trying to follow me. Please, please, I've always been afraid that some day someone would."

"And if I did follow you, would I ever find you?" The Broker was leaning forward, looking stolidly intent.

"Find me?"

"Yes, finders keepers, you know." He spoke simply and then smiled a little uncertainly. She caught desperately at the smile.

"Ah, I laugh so much at my own nonsense that I do not even see the nonsense of others. Finders keepers, losers weepers! You wouldn't have me weep? I couldn't, anyway. I never cry more than once a year, and I paid my annual tears at the dock the day we sailed." She was talking against time, and suddenly her words struck flat on her ear. She stopped abruptly. In her restless brain a small voice was saying: "Is this mere bulk of finance at your side capable of rattling you?" She looked at the

bulk. Apparently he was. She could have boxed his ears. This was the time for him to feel a fool and he obviously didn't. She drew her rug up to her chin and scowled over dimpling cheeks. "Have you noticed that the sea is particularly fine this morning? I think we should be watching it and not daffing with our eyes on the deck."

"I assure you I haven't once looked at the deck."

She saw no reason for asking him what he had been looking at. "I have a great sympathy for the sea," she continued lazily; "it is so unmercifully slandered. Miss Judd says it is looking at the sea that makes her sick. I think as a rule it is looking at the passengers."

"What!" The Broker was disapproving. He was about to stand up for his fellow, the average man.

"Oh, yes, I've crossed six times and I've only felt ill once; that was purely the fault of a girl who ate half of a five-pound box of candy at seven of a foggy morning."

"Why did you look at her?"

"Don't say such things. That's the sort of question a relative would ask. I looked at her because I couldn't help it. To see pink gum drops and candied violets disappearing into that green countenance on a gray drenched morning! It was a color scheme no one could have ignored." She bit her lip and looked at him sideways. "It's not having a bad effect on you, is it?"

"Hardly, but I'm sure Miss Judd ought not to hear it."

"No; poor Miss Judd!" She watched him a moment, then pulled her hands from under her rug, waved them in the air and cried softly: "You are on the point of saying she is feminine; I forbid it. What you mean is she's vegetable. You may have the use of the word if you like it."

"I don't." The Broker returned it courteously with a nod of his head. There was a silence. The Woman in Green glared at the sea. She had meant "vegetable"; she was not going to retract "vegetable." The silence continued.

"How amazingly fresh your roses keep!" This from the Broker casually.

The Woman in Green sat up suddenly. "Oh, oh, oh! If you're going on exactly as though I hadn't been rude, I shall have to say I'm sorry. If you'd maintained a reproving silence I never would have said a word." She looked at him and his eyes were blinking away a convulsed smile. "I—er—I don't know Miss Judd at all. It's possible she is not a vegetable; she may be very charming. She may even be both." Here the Woman in Green made an infinitesimal grimace.

The Broker rose. "Let's walk," he said.

As they stopped a moment to look down at the steerage the Woman in Green glanced back. Miss Judd was standing by their just vacated chairs. Had the Broker by any chance suspected her approach? The Woman in Green for no visible reason crowed faintly, and they moved on. "I'm just wondering—what do you think?—is it decent to stand looking down at the steerage passengers? One could look across with propriety, but down, it seems a shade impertinent. I know that whenever I see anyone looking out of a second story window at me the top of my hat feels injured for blocks. How do you suppose the steerage people feel?"

The Broker tramped silently at her side. "I don't want to goad you into thinking," she added wickedly. He looked down at her and would have given his chance of ultimately landing to have been able to say a silencing thing. The idea of seeing her subdued for an uninterrupted five minutes excited him. There must be something she could not find an answer to. There must be. He ransacked his brain and was unconscious that he was still looking down at her, her question still unanswered.

She glared up at him. "You needn't help me now to decide the matter of how the steerage people feel. I know. You've been steadily looking down at me for the last ten minutes. If a matter of four inches can enrage one, the

yards and yards we look down on the steerage passengers makes them hate us. They're quite right. I for the first time believe in a general leveling of everything."

"I beg your pardon. My sense of direction had become hopelessly perverted; I thought I was looking up." Would she, would she find an answer to that?

"A compliment, by all the signs a compliment. It shall be rewarded. Miss Judd, here is someone who wants to read to you." The Broker was left on Miss Judd's willing hands. He watched furiously the Woman in Green continue along the deck. She, of course, had found an answer. He had been a fool as well as feeling one. He began to read, using such a tone that Miss Judd cooed, "Oh, don't shout; it's a love story." And he looked surprised, as though she had said something obvious.

THE SIXTH DAY OUT

Never before in his whole life had the Broker been so inundated with the society of women as he now was every day from eight in the morning until eleven at night. He felt drenched with exclamation marks; unfinished sentences were turned from his benumbed ears; half shades of liking and delicate shadows of dislike permeated his troubled mind. He was unable to inhale half the feminine atmosphere that crowded at his nostrils. He gasped and vowed his only hope was to down the Woman in Green. She had not told him her name, after all. He had heard her called Meredith. Once, it was no doubt by accident, she had sat in a chair with that name on it. This may have started the rumor. Most of the time she dragged a rug and pillow about the hurricane deck and scolded the wind. The Broker was impressed, fascinated, with the slipperiness of her. Her capacity for vanishing and suddenly bobbing up was unlimited. If it was possible to make a verbal trap for her, if she could be genuinely

flabbergasted, he felt that he would breathe freely once more and regain the support of being a man. Just at present he suspected it of being a handicap.

Tomorrow the boat would land, and the Woman in Green herself had told him that the last day was always given over to finding the things you had lost down the cracks of your state room, putting on your traveling clothes some three hours too soon and wondering if the passengers who then appeared for the first time were castaways. Her knowledge of the exact procedure of shipboard life appalled him. He felt himself incapable of diverging in the smallest particular from the routine she prophesied. This made at least the fourth reason for subduing her. And it obviously had to be done today, the sixth day. She had said that the sixth was the day when everyone developed violent friendships with everyone else, exchanged addresses that were sedulously lost and read one another's palms with much meaning. He felt confident that he would do none of these things, yet doubted strongly his talent for originality. Perhaps there was something she had purposely not mentioned. He would probably do that. It might be safe to get his plan of action outlined.

He sat down beside Miss Judd and pondered on it. There was something charmingly simple about thinking of other things when talking to Miss Judd. It made him really very fond of her. Nothing occurred to him, and his depression increased. Miss Judd was going to sing at the concert and had been practising. She was still flushed with the perilous heights of her trills. The Woman in Green was helping a number of people to decide to do things and playing their accompaniments when their minds were fully made up.

A ridiculous fuss had been made about the concert, the Broker thought. He had bumped into people all day long in an effort to get near the Woman in Green, and here it was nearing the dinner hour and he had not said five words to her. He talked to Miss Judd with a desperate eye out for that tan-

talizing woman. The dressing discord sounded and everyone went below. The Broker lingered. It was quite useless. The decks were empty now except for a human bolster here and there encumbering a chair. He went to dinner early and ate two ices and no meat in his relief at seeing her just two tables away. She was dressed in white and talking rapidly. This drove him to ordering the second ice. He hurried up, ready to pounce on her the moment she appeared. People were roaming about with heavy coats over evening clothes. The moon was shining persistently through skittish clouds. She did not come. The Broker went below. He found her in the writing room helping a pretty pair of twins to transpose some jingles that they were to recite. She laughed him away and he followed the people who were gathering for the concert. He saved a corner of a divan for her, and to repay him she remained invisible. The chairman, a red-faced celebrity in a white waistcoat, opened the affair. He made a ponderous jest or two, and blew through many flowery phrases. A slim young man, with British eyeglasses which flourish and survive under enough metal work to weigh down the largest nose, sang, "Love Me and the World is Mine." Giggles from a distant corner suggested that the most optimistic girl might have been justified in doubting it. The Broker was in a state of great agitation. He was sure that she was not at the concert. He had stared everyone out of countenance in the hope that they would disclose one of her features. He was about to wind his way out when Miss Judd began to sing. It was, "The Lass with the Delicate Air." It would have been. He applauded madly and rushed from the place.

The Woman in Green was leaning on the railing, looking at the moon. Her dark green cloak was open at the throat. Her powers of escaping drove everything but relief at finding her from the Broker's mind. He touched her hand and exclaimed, "I thought you had left the ship."

She started and smiled. "I couldn't do that, you know."

"Oh, yes, you could. You'd find a way if you really wanted to do it." He, too, leaned on the railing.

"But it was only the concert I wanted to escape."

"Why under the sun didn't you come? I held a place for you through three awful numbers."

"But I never go to ship concerts. I should think you could have guessed that."

"Yet you've been working for it all day. I haven't had a word from you."

"You've been amusing yourself, nevertheless. Miss Judd tells me you talk most interestingly on—what was it—Poe or politics? I don't quite remember."

He took her hand. "Stop looking at the moon. I love you."

"Don't, don't please. This is mid-sea madness." Her other hand was fluttering at her throat. Her eyes were troubled and her lips parted on big breaths.

"It will last after landing, and long after that."

She spoke very slowly and distinctly: "Please let go of my hand; please do not speak in this way again."

"I love you. I must talk to you; you must stay and listen." Then he

loosened his grasp on her hand, which was pure bravado, and without moving a step she buried her face in her hands. The Broker watched her. She was silent and he did not remember that it was the thing he had wanted. He only knew that she would not go away and that for the moment it was best not to speak. The quiet became noticeable. A big sheepish smile crossed his face. Then he saw a tear gleam between her parted fingers and he took her in his arms, crying, "Speak, speak to me! Just say that you know you will never elude me again, and that you are willing always to make me feel a fool." Even then she did not speak. Her hands dropped from her tear-stained face; she bowed her head and gave a wabby little laugh. People escaping from the concert were heard on the stairs. The two fled to the other end of the ship. When they emerged from the shadows of the moon the deck chairs were full. They walked past them. Miss Judd in blue chiffon was struggling with her rug. The Broker paused and a firm hand slipped through his arm. He straightened and they walked on. "I—I think I feel a little banal. You see, I've never before succumbed to mid-sea madness." It was the first time that the Woman in Green had broken the silence.

Far down the deck Miss Judd yawned.



TO A FLIRT

By H. E. K.

HERE'S to her love, though it live but an hour,
Here's to the glow in the heart of a flow'r.
And would it be fair, do you think—and pray why—
To crush a poor flower because it must die?

Then drink to her love, for as long as it lives,
And drink to the joy and the pain that it gives,
For we may as well own it and swallow our pride,
We'd be damned glad to win her, and *most* of us tried.

'Twill be all the same in a million years!

By GELETT BURGESS

ABOUT a million years or so from now,
If my spirit perseveres upon the way,
I would like to turn the pages
Of the records of the ages,
Till I come across the Story of Today!

*In the Libraries of Heaven there are books that ne'er are hidden,
And the Saints are not forbidden there to read;
For by virtue they're exempted, and they can no more be tempted—
And mine's the silliest story, yes, indeed!*

Perhaps I'll be serener then than now,
Be cooler then, and keener, as a rule;
I shall see just how the ending
Of my fate was long impending,
And the way a maiden played me for a fool.

*In the Corridors of Heaven you will meet them, every maiden,
And their features will be laden with their smiles;
You will often see them wriggle, with a still, self-conscious giggle,
When they meet the men they've captured with their wiles!*

I'll doff my harp and halo in the shade,
I'll smile and maybe say low to my soul,
"I am one amongst a billion
In this blessed old pavilion
Who is entered as an ass upon the scroll!"

*In the Comedies of Heaven there are many farces treating
Of the meeting of the lovers of the past;
Of the widow who has tarried, finding husbands she has married,
And of spouses grown polygamous at last!*

But now I'm sad and weary of it all;
My eyes are rather teary, anyhow;
I am feeling dead and wilted
At the way that I was jilted,
And I wish it were a million years from now!

*In the Palaces of Heaven, where the harps are ever plinking,
I shall find a maiden winking in the row;
And we, purged of all our follies, shall exchange unnumbered jollies
Over things that went awry so long ago!*

CAMILLA

By JULES ECKERT GOODMAN

NEW ENGLAND in Indian summer time! Nowhere else, at no other season, does the air have that ripe mellowness, that strange velvety quality. A magic time this, when nature seems resting from its hot travail, pausing for a bit in musing solitude before it begins again upon its autumn and its winter labors. The colors upon the horizon are softer and subtler, and though they play in greater variety, they look fewer, so perfectly are they blended. A haziness as of sweet melancholy spreads a transparent, golden-russet mantle over the hills and meadows, giving to reality the semblance of a mirage. It is a pause time, dream time.

Was it then a bird's note or only the voice of a girl singing there in the conservatory in the early morning sun? Surely one had heard that song before, and no bird ever fashioned a song so like the echo of a human song! Bird song? The spell of the morning must have enfolded her. Six months before a woman in pink gauzy skirts had sung that song, sung it in a place called a city, in a building called a theater. Another song. She is mixing the melodies as a little child spills shining pebbles upon the beach, a haphazard of beauty and fancy. Bird songs?

The lady herself appears. Not much of a lady, scarcely more than a slip of a girl. Eighteen perhaps, perhaps twenty; twenty-two, a friend once whispered under breath—a girl friend. But the years mean nothing; youth was hers by right of the light in her eyes, by the right of joy which is ever young. Should sorrow come, then the years would tell; her friend might then

be right, she might be twenty-two. Now as she tripped through the conservatory entrance, her arms weighted with the blossoming freight of blooms, she was not a day over sixteen; not a day—maybe she was a day younger, even. For, who ever heard of a girl of past sixteen who was silly enough to talk to flowers and to sing to them? But New England in Indian summer time! Queer fancies come.

"Roses, roses, everywhere roses!" Did she sing or speak the words as she placed the flowers around the room in the different vases and jars? "You saucy creature! How dare you, sir, how dare you?" This to a rose which had bobbed against her lips. "There, take that for your rudeness!" and she gave what the flower had stolen. "How good they smell, as if they filled the whole world with sweetness. No wonder Camilla is so happy here. Who wouldn't be? Plenty of fresh air, plenty of big rich roses. Oh, they didn't take all of paradise from earth, I'm sure. They must have left a little slice up here in Massachusetts!"

Again the songs and the chattering. Perhaps he was drawn by the melody, or he may just have come. It was so near breakfast time. At any rate, he stood there at the door and watched the girl for a few minutes, the poet in him thrilling to the beauty and youth in her. He was *old*, past thirty-five, but the little boy in him had never died. So he stole up quietly behind her and grasped her hand. "Once upon a time," he began, but her exclamation of surprise cut him short.

"Oh—oh, good morning, Godfrey," she said.

"Once upon a time," he went on, determined not to be cheated out of his share of the glory of the morning.

"A fairy story before breakfast?" she queried, as if by consent fitting into his mood. "The little child will be good all day and say her prayers tonight. She may even kiss the wonderful weaver of tales."

"Once upon a time, then, there was a tiny little rosebud that grew just underneath a poet's window. The poet was not a very great poet, but the good-natured world liked him, and some even understood him. The tiny little rosebud grew just underneath the poet's window. It knew nothing of all this until one day the poet took it between his hands very gently—thus—bent over and kissed it—thus!"

"And what did the rosebud know then, O master poet?" she asked, her lips still puckered from the kiss.

"It knew that it was good morning and that—the poet had no right to more than bare half of the praise."

She looked up at him a bit frightened. He turned and walked over to a chair. There was a moment's silence.

"Do you know, sir," she said gaily, though a note of something like sadness had crept into her voice, "those are rather dangerous words to put into a little girl's head. They are worse than the fairy stories, for one grows to believe them in time."

"And they are meant to be believed. That is what truth is born for."

"Is truth then born? I thought it 'just grewed.'"

"No, indeed. Truth is the child of Father Time and Mother Earth. That is why she carries with her the weave of the hours and the web of life. Her face is set toward eternity, but her feet tread the soil of the present. And that, little sister, is just what you are."

"Am I as horrid as that?" She was trying hard to scare away some vague dread.

"Just as horrid and just—as beautiful; full of the wonder glory of life, and full of its pain; for out of pain is born happiness. There you have your genealogy, dear little girl."

A small cloud passed before the sun, and the streaming light was dim for a time. The vague dread was taking shape, was becoming all distinct. The fairyland had vanished and she stood clear in reality. "Godfrey!" she said low, so low that he did not hear, or maybe he was too busy with a rose that he held in his hand. "Godfrey!"

He turned quickly, struck by the change in her tone.

"I—I—I don't think you ought to say those things to me," she stammered.

He went to her. "Not even if they are true?"

"But they are not true," she persisted, hoping for she knew not what answer.

"But they *are* true. It is you who give a meaning to my work. It is upon your youth, your living warmth of life, that I draw."

Her hands clenched and her breath came too quick to form into words.

"Then—then—"

"Then what?"

"Then I ought to go away, oughtn't I?" At last it was out.

"As though Camilla and I would let you. Foolish little truth child, to think of it." He was trying to comfort her as he would a child, and so she seemed to him at the moment, a little child in trouble.

"But Camilla," she persisted, "don't you see? Is it fair—is it right to Camilla?"

He realized in a flash how much depended upon his answer. It was not now a question of mere happiness or unhappiness. Far more than this was at stake—her faith, trust, ideals.

"I am going to let you answer that question yourself," he said. "Think now, think well. Look in your own heart. Do you see any wrong?"

"No, but—"

"Wait. Now answer as I ask. Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"And how?"

"Like one whom I have known always, a brother, perhaps a father, or only a fine friend and comrade."

"And I love you as a little sister, a little daughter. And that is why it is right."

"But Camilla?"

"That, too, is why it is right. Camilla knows all and Camilla approves. That makes it so right."

"Yes, but Camilla is so queer, Godfrey."

He it was who was frightened now. "What do you mean?" he asked quickly. "How did you know?"

"Camilla is queer—queer," she went on. "Doesn't she scare you sometimes? She does me, awfully, sometimes, and she is my sister and I ought to be used to her."

"You mean about the animals," he answered, trying for his own sake as well as hers to avoid the main issue. "Camilla has certainly wonderful control over animals, yet that is not so unusual."

"Yes, I know but—"

"Yesterday," he went on hurriedly, still keeping away from what he feared she might say, "yesterday Susan had one of her vicious spells, kicked over Watkins, and had the stable boys so scared they wouldn't go near her. Camilla went up to the mare, looked her in the eyes and said gently, 'Susan, dear Susan.' A child could have gone into her stall after that. Wasn't it wonderful?"

"Oh, that is not half what she does." He couldn't stop her now, and he knew it by the breathless manner in which she spoke and by the way his own heart beat. "I'll tell you something I have never before told anyone. It happened years ago when I was very young, yet the sight of it is in my eyes this very minute as if it had happened only yesterday. Camilla and I were walking in the woods, gathering flowers, at least I was. Camilla was— You never saw anything like her. She can catch a squirrel; she can outrun a rabbit. We were going home about sunset, and we had got just to the lodge, when— It seems that because of the heat some of the dogs had gone mad, and one of these came running out at us. I shall never forget Camilla. I

screamed and ran. Not she. She went slowly up to the beast. She had a walking stick in her hand. The dog stood stone still, all shivering and frothy, looking at Camilla with its eyelids opening and shutting sleepily over its greenish eyes, and Camilla— It was awful— Camilla clubbed it to death!"

"What!" He jumped half out of the chair into which he had sunk.

"Awful, wasn't it? But, of course, that was the only thing to do. Yet it was terrible and I can see the awful sight now."

"Awful—awful," he murmured. "I wish that were the only awful thing about Camilla."

"You mean the way she looks at one?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered, his eyes flaming, "the way she looks at one."

"Then you, too, have felt it. Do you know sometimes, when she looks at me in that silent way of hers, I feel just as though I, too, were an animal, a cat or a dog, and I want to creep up on my hands and knees and lick her feet. It is a sickening, dreadful feeling until I seem to wake out of it, and then there comes over me a flood of love for her that is almost irresistible." Suddenly she saw him staring peculiarly at the opposite door. "Godfrey, Godfrey," she cried in terror, "what are you staring at in that way?"

He shook himself from his trance. "I was a thousand miles away, kneeling at her feet," he said dreamily. "Strange, when she is in the house I can feel it and I cannot write; all my poetry and all my music leave me." He turned to her. "Don't you see, little sister, don't you see how much I need you, how much—"

She stopped him. "Don't say it, Godfrey, please don't. As long as I am of use to you, use me. There is always time to leave." She came up to him and sat down at his feet, some of her former exuberance returning. "Now, mighty poet, I am ready to fill my heart at the springs of poesy. Bubble—bubble, I am ready with my cup."

Even New England in Indian summer time has its practical notes, and the magic of its morning is ever broken in upon by dull reality. For, as he sat there and she knelt at his feet, the two gone back to childhood again, there appeared at the entrance a well-fed, practical-looking man of forty. John Thornton was of the type who seemed to be born in a frock coat and derby hat. You can divide the men of the world pretty much into two classes: those who mentally have never outgrown knee breeches and sailor blouse, and those who have never worn them. Thornton in such a costume would have been an impossibility; he would have looked naked. Camilla once said of him: "The trouble with John is that you can never think of him as Jack." But then Camilla's opinions were apt to be original to an unusual degree, and Thornton had always been a sort of foil to her. "Some day, John," she said to him, pronouncing the vowel in his name as long as possible, "some day, John, you'll be born and then you'll wake up." Again Camilla was over fanciful, for Thornton was what was known as "an exemplary man," and "a highly respected citizen," even "something of a power in Wall Street." Being such, he could look down upon pleasantries, especially when from an old friend like Camilla.

"Camilla is so queer." Everyone added that sentence as a matter of fact, a parenthesis of Q.E.D., as it were.

Thornton stood there unobserved in the entrance watching the pretty little group before him. He may even have envied Flaire, for Claire there was certainly a most attractive girl. Jove! how she would look in a ball costume! Or in décolleté across the dinner table. And that complexion was real, not like— Well, a wife's a wife and— What was that Flaire was saying?

"What sort of nectar shall we have today?"

He could fit into the mood after all. "Ambrosia for mine, Flaire," he said, coming forward with a laugh. Then to the other: "Morning, Miss Claire."

She tried to rise as a tribute to her

years, Thornton, the symbol of conventionality, calling her back from the fairyland in which she had strayed. "Good morning, Mr. Thornton," she answered. "I'd be more proper if Godfrey would let me."

"If you caught a butterfly like this," said Flaire with a smile, "what would you do with it, Thornton? Would you let it go?"

"No," said Thornton, the *savoir faire* of the man of the world coming quickly to the rescue; "I would mount it in plaster of Paris and make a desk weight of it, something to hold down my dearest possessions." And he beamed with the expansiveness of a man who believes that he has struck off a neat phrase.

Flaire helped his sister-in-law to her feet. "And I," he answered musingly, "I would let it go that the whole world might be more beautiful for it—always hoping," he added, "that one day it would fly back to me."

All of which was rather embarrassing to the lady discussed. She sought refuge in a change of subject. "Is Mrs. Thornton up yet?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed," replied Thornton; "she has been up for hours, it seems to me. She has been waiting for the day to adjust itself to her gown. And Camilla?" he asked.

"Camilla always goes out with the dogs for a ride before breakfast," answered Flaire quickly.

"So she still does that?" said Thornton, and something like a shadow of fear crossed his face.

Claire noticed it. "Still, Mr. Thornton," she said significantly.

He answered her look. "No, thank you, for me," he responded firmly, "no, thank you."

"Why, did you and Camilla ever ride together?" asked Flaire. "I had no idea—"

"Just once," said Thornton quickly. "I used to be a fair horseman and I had less flesh on me. But once was enough for a whole lifetime."

Flaire smiled. "Tell us about it," he asked eagerly.

Thornton was growing more and more

embarrassed. "It was a long while ago, before you ever knew Camilla, Flaire. Miss Claire probably remembers. I would rather not speak about it," he said abruptly.

"It was only one of Camilla's jokes," said Claire, her good humor possibly assumed. "Do you remember how she laughed?"

"One doesn't forget quite so easily when one has been made a fool of, Miss Claire." And then just as the air was thickening Mrs. Thornton entered and the "good mornings" put an end to the whole subject.

"You know," said Mrs. Thornton, "I slept perfectly heavenly. It reminded me of what I used to think the country might be and never was." She was just the sort of wife you would expect for Thornton—large, blonde, with a figure which immediately made one want to ask her who her modiste was. She prided herself upon being a perfect hostess when at home and "no nuisance" when visiting. Her pride in both cases was based upon presumption. Her husband, who had steadily increased her weekly allowance, was very much satisfied with her; for had he not the receipted bills to prove her worth? Not that he reasoned it so consciously. On the contrary, his thoughts ran along that delightful groove of vanity that it *does* give a man a feeling of satisfaction to know that his clothing is made by the "right" tailor, that he dines at the "correct" place and that his spouse has been built up on "direct-from-Paris" system.

"I am nearly famished," went on Helen, assuming what she thought a good-fellowship. "Godfrey, you have a perfectly lovely home and—" Here the butler announced breakfast. "I couldn't have completed my sentence any better," she said with a laugh.

"But Camilla?" asked Thornton.

"Don't wait for Camilla," answered Flaire. "She is often late; in fact, it is almost a rule with her. I will wait alone, if you don't mind."

"But we can all wait," broke in Thornton. "I am sure Helen was—"

"I was only funning, Godfrey," she

said. "You don't think I am quite that rude."

"It isn't a question of rudeness," he answered with a laugh. "I had no idea of you people waiting for Camilla. We never wait for her. There," he cried, "I hear horses in the courtyard now. Look, Perkins," he called to the butler.

"It is Mrs. Flaire," said the gentleman of gold braid.

"There, now," begged Flaire, "please go down and we will follow you in just a moment."

When they had left he hurried to the conservatory and looked out toward the stable yard. "Great heavens," he murmured, "look at that horse! She must have run her all the way home! Covered with foam as if she were mottled white! And the dogs, half dead! Camilla," he called, "Camilla!"

From the distance came her voice: "Coming, sir, coming."

There was a ripple of laughter, and a second later she darted in through the plants. A tall, slender woman one said at first glance. A nearer inspection told that she was rather short and willowy, perhaps wiry, rather than slim. It must have been the tan riding costume which so clung about her that it seemed part of her and not a mere covering for her body, for its every fold was expressive of meaning. Beautiful? No one ever called Camilla beautiful, but almost everyone declared she was "wonderful." It was her eyes, chameleon eyes, Godfrey named them, for they changed color with her costume, with her mood. They ran a gamut from black through deep blue into gray. Most often, however, they were green, the green of the sea. "There is all the mystery of the sea in your eyes," Flaire had once said to her. "There is no mystery in the sea," she had answered, "only a splendid, tremendous unrest, a sort of throb of immortality."

Half stumbling, half tripping she came into the room. Her hair had been tossed back over her forehead and now played in unruly little curls about her head. In her hand she held a carnation,

its petals ragged and torn from use as a whip, the only sort of whip Camilla ever used. She could have stood for Diana, but a Diana into whose ear a Bacchus or a faun might have whispered.

"It was so funny, Godfrey," she laughed. "I think Susan herself saw the joke. It was great, too." Then as she saw the ridging on his forehead: "Don't look so serious. I could almost kiss you—you look that forlorn."

"Why don't you, then?" he answered, trying to catch her mood.

The little question apparently startled. "And be like any other woman?" She shook her head. "No, thank you. Besides, I just kissed Susan. She understands me, too. You should have heard her laugh. It was glorious! Glorious! Guess, Godfrey," she cried, suddenly jerking his hand like a child.

"Guess what?"

"A race—and guess with what?"

Camilla's races were ever beyond him. "How should I know?" he said.

"Oh, guess, guess," she cajoled.

"With your shadow as well as anything," he replied absently.

"Guessed it the first time," she exclaimed. "Think of it, Godfrey," she went on excitedly, "a race with one's own shadow. There's mettle for you. You wouldn't dare, my poet. But Susan— Over her ear I would bend and whisper, 'Beat it out, Susan, beat it out.' And she would lengthen her body and through the air we flew and through the morning. Talk about your Pegasus, he would have been beaten at his own game, Godfrey." She flung herself upon the couch in an abandon of happy fatigue—at least it seemed fatigue to him.

He went to her. "And now you are tired, eh?" he said gently.

"Tired?" She looked up at him amused. "I'll tell you a secret, Godfrey. I am never tired, for always I hold the reins in my hands, the reins and— Look!" She sat upright, the carnation in her hand before her. "I take this flower"—she might have been a conjurer—"and I touch my forehead

with it, thus—then my two wrists, so—my lips and—" She leaned back against him. "Godfrey," she cried, "kiss me. I'm a mad, foolish thing, but I love you."

"Not now," he said low; "now you are the woman."

The merest shadow of fear crept into her eyes.

"A real honest woman?"

He nodded.

"No imitation?"

He smiled.

"No paste?"

"Real, real," he murmured.

"Then I'll tell you," she exclaimed suddenly. "Come. You sit there and I will lie here with my head on your knee—"

"But breakfast? You must be—"

"Breakfast?" She laughed at him.

"Who wants to eat breakfast and talk with a lot of stuffy people when one can look into your eyes?" He drew away from her gaze and tried to laugh, but she was holding him, and he knew that Camilla had one of her "moods." It was one of her "glorious" days. "You know," she continued after a pause, "you have very pretty eyes, Godfrey; did you know that? Don't look away. I want to see my reflection in them. And sometimes I get such a queer fancy; I think that if God has eyes they will be like yours. And at other times, at night, when you think I am asleep, when I hear you breathing at my side, I can see with my eyes closed your eyes, and they look to me like stars, stars that I try to reach. I fall asleep, dreaming that I am struggling toward them, but I always awake before the journey is done."

"You never reach them, Camilla," said her husband, "because they are no stars, only—"

She roused herself with a start. "I'll not let you spoil my dream. If I say they are stars, then stars they are—to me!" He bent over and kissed her. "Isn't this nicer? Isn't this better than all the breakfasts in the world? We see so little of each other, Godfrey."

"That is because morning, noon and

often far into the night you are always riding."

"One must ride, you know," she said wistfully. "It is life to me, just as your poetry is life to you. Yet there are pauses, pauses when you listen to my riding, when I listen to your poetry. I am listening now, Godfrey. Tell me." That wonderful tenderness had crept into her voice, "the siren symphony of soul and sex," Flaire had phrased it in one of his poems.

"Tell you what?" he asked.

"Stories—poems of your world." The slightest tremor wove into her voice. "Stories like those you tell Claire."

"Hadn't we better go to breakfast?" he said, trying to draw away the conversation.

"Godfrey!" There was a harsh note in her voice now, like the low, dark rim behind which the sun is setting.

"But I don't know a story and it's all so foolish—so childish . . ."

"How I have envied Claire that childishness, that foolishness, poet. Do you think, Godfrey, if I sent Claire home to mother, you would sometimes be able to tell them to me?"

"Camilla," he cried, startled, and grew even more startled when he saw that she noted his uneasiness, "Camilla, if you did that—"

"Yes, yes, I know," she interrupted him, "the little poet would never sing again, eh? All the inspiration would be quite gone?" He turned away. "So say we all. When autumn comes, 'I die,' cries summer. 'Farewell,' sobs autumn when winter appears, and so cries winter and so sobs spring. Yet each year, century after century, they return to sing their chord in the great harmony of the universe. And so with you and me, my husband. We each have a single note to sing, and for all eternity and eternities to follow, we must go on strumming at that vibrant string." It was as if the smile crept rather into her voice than her eyes. "Now pick me that chord, I charge you."

He tried. The poet in him cried a bravo to her fine fancy and he would

like to have met it, but suddenly he felt empty, dried up like a spring after a drought. He guessed, too, something of the penalty, for the light was playing dangerously in Camilla's eyes, black now with flashes that made him think of the lightning at night. "Come to breakfast," he begged. "Not now."

"Breakfast!" She arose threateningly. "It is always, 'Not now' or 'Come to breakfast' when I ask. Do you ever say 'Not now' to Claire?" He went to the window and looked out. "Do you? Answer me!"

"Camilla." He half turned, trying to ward off the storm.

"Answer me!" There was command, brutal, unforgiving command in the words. "Answer me, I say!"

"What matters it what I say to Claire—" he began.

"It matters this much," she broke in upon him, "that I *will* know." She was pacing angrily up and down the room. "I have the right." Every muscle of her seemed vibrating with emotion, seemed a chorus to what she was saying. "You are mine, you hear, given to me by law, by destiny, what you will. I claim what is my own, my slave—my dog, if I will."

"Camilla, are you mad?" And he meant the words literally.

"Mad, eh?" The words were low and charged with feeling. She went up to him and stood staring, almost leering, into his eyes. Then suddenly with all her force she tossed the carnation into his face. "There!" she cried.

"What do you mean? How dare you? How—" And then as he saw Claire, who had come for them, standing at the entrance, he stopped short.

"What do I mean, Godfrey?" She, too, now caught sight of Claire, and went quickly toward her.

"Aren't you coming down to breakfast?" asked Claire, timidly choosing the worst question possible, already trembling under the grasp of her sister.

"Breakfast!" cried Camilla, now growing infuriated. "Another flesh eater! What do I mean, Godfrey? This is what I mean. She—her—her—her, you understand?" and she

shook her sister roughly by the shoulder.

"Camilla, Camilla," begged Claire, "please—"

With a turn she flung her from her, flung her with such force that she fell in a heap at the foot of the couch. "That's *your* place, you little cheat, you," she cried; "and you—" She went up to her husband. "You look at me!"

He did look, saw the eyes darting with passion, madness, cruelty. "Camilla," he said, "if ever the devil took woman's form, he would look as you do now."

"The devil at least was a gentleman," she sneered. "Pick her up," and then as he paused, "why don't you pick her up? Don't you know enough even to pick up the woman you love from the dirt?"

"You are right," he said finally, and went to Claire.

"Yes, and stay as you are." She stood threateningly over them. "Don't rise until I tell you two what I have to say to you."

"Godfrey," cried Claire, catching at his arm, "I'm afraid, awfully afraid. Her eyes, look at them."

"That's right," she hurled at them, "crouch at his side! You say it's a brother's love for a sister. A lie! A man doesn't get inspiration for poetry from a sister! It comes from the love of a man for the woman in a woman. It comes from a guilty love, you understand, a guilty love!"

Flaire had sprung to his feet, no longer able to control himself. "I know what you are now, Camilla," he cried; "you're only half human. You have no soul and you'd rob me of mine." She smiled. "Don't laugh. You're all animal, like Susan out there, like the other animals you tame." She broke forth in laughter as she saw him growing infuriated. "Don't laugh, I say, Camilla, or you'll drive me out of my head." Louder she laughed. "Don't laugh, I say, or by God, I'll strangle you, devil that you are!"

And then it happened. He forgot his sex, his training, the years of his civilization. He grasped her by the throat, trying to throttle her. But

the arms that had ruled Susan were not weak. There was more strength in them than in his. Besides, she was calm now. Smiling, laughing gently, she undid his hands from about her throat. In spite of all his strength she held him at arm's length. The mad, cruel light had left her eyes, and the tenderness had swept back. When she spoke her tones were quiet and calm as if nothing had happened.

"You see I am strong, Godfrey," she said gently. "You'd be, too, if you would only ride..." In a sudden access of emotion she drew his arms about her neck until he had enfolded her. "Godfrey, Godfrey," she half sobbed, "my dear little poet, don't you know that I love you?"

He had already come to a realization of his act and it stung him, hurt him. It was not so much that he had tried to kill his wife as the fact that he had struck a woman. Poet and man in him revolted at the idea. "I feel like a beast," was all that he could mutter.

"How I wish you were!" she cried. "How I wish you were a dog or a horse and then..." She saw Claire still huddled there in the corner upon the floor. "Why, Claire dear." She went to her, all sister now. "Poor little Sis, how you are crying!" Gently she lifted her up. "Come, dear, come." She led her to the couch and made her sit. "Now, Godfrey, you, too." She made him sit beside Claire. "Your arm so," and she wove his arm about the waist of her sister. "And *your* head so." She placed Claire's head upon his shoulder. "And your hands clasped." Over the two of them she bent, leaning her chin upon her husband's head. "Now, listen; this is the kind of poetry I wish you would write, Godfrey:

"And yet, she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life forever old, yet new,
Changed not in any kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity—
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together—forever ride.

"Write me something like that of Browning's, all about horses and heaven and riding, always riding." She jumped up. "Now I am going to change my gown. I'll be back in five minutes." She went to the door. "Don't forget," she called, "in five minutes." And just as she was passing out, "Try to write me a poem like that, Godfrey."

They sat alone, Godfrey and Claire, as she had left them, head upon shoulder, hand clasped in hand. Their eyes were turned away from each other. Not a word did they say, but in that silence each felt that something had risen up between them. That splendid fine flower, innocence, had been plucked, crushed. The little children would play no more. The girl was a woman of twenty-two now and each year counted a full twelve months.

Gradually their eyes met and for a moment they gazed so. Then slowly Claire raised her head, disengaged her hand from his and rose. Without a word she walked slowly to the conservatory entrance. She paused there and her hand fell upon a rose. She looked down at it, picked it, and finally turned and brought it back to him.

"A rose for you, Godfrey," she said. "You might write a poem about it. How it sprang on its thorny bush from the black soil, how it grew more beautiful each day until—until a foolish girl picked it—to give it to you."

"You are leaving, then?" he said quietly.

"Yes. Camilla is right, isn't she?"

"Camilla has done what the world does, has made right wrong, just as we are doing."

"Good-bye," she said simply.

"Good-bye. I'll miss you."

That was all and she was gone, out through the flowers there, out of his life, the rose in his hand all that was left of her. He sat there gazing at it and trying to understand, his head dizzy, his heart throbbing, a feeling of utter futility in his soul. Yet he had short time to indulge his feelings,

for Camilla already stood at the door again. She had changed her gown for one of different color, but still wore a riding habit. She had evidently not wasted any time, for she was still trying to fasten the collar. She was evidently, too, in an absolutely happy humor, for she was laughing low to herself. On tiptoe she stole up behind him, grasped his arm and wrapped it about her waist, perching there upon his knee.

"Not five minutes by the clock," she cried. She caught sight of the flower which he held in his hand. "Did you pick the rose for me?" she said eagerly. He shook his head. "But you'll give it to me, won't you?" she coquetted. Again he shook his head. "Oh, yes, you will," she went on coaxingly. Then suddenly: "Let's barter for it."

"How?" he asked wonderingly.

"I'll tell you," she exclaimed; "you give me the rose and I'll give you a poem for it. Listen. You think you're the great poet of this family. Now, listen." She paused for a second and then began, and he could feel the throb of her heart in his ear. "Sometime, Godfrey, Godfrey, when all this devil's heat is burned out of our breasts, when you cannot sing any more than the few bars that the wind plays on the dead ashes of your young life; when all this mad, crazy fire that burns and boils in my bosom lies smoldering and dying; when Susan answers no more to my touch and her eyes shine red; then, Godfrey, my Godfrey, you and I, like two leaves of the forest, shall float on a breeze in the autumn, far into the land of the twilight. And close to each other in that cold shall we press and our hearts beat in time, and our breasts rise and fall like the throbs of our pulse. Then, Godfrey, from the pressure of your heart pressed on mine, from the warmth of your breath warmed in mine, from the flush of your cheek flushed on mine, Godfrey, my Godfrey, shall be born a fire, and in the tangled halos of our hair shall live transfused the poem of our lives." She snatched the rose from his hand

with a laugh. "Did I not say I would have the rose? Fasten my collar, Godfrey."

"Camilla," he said painfully, "give me back the rose."

"Didn't you give it to me?" she begged. And before he could reply she went on: "Godfrey, why aren't you a rose? Then I'd wear you on my bosom and you'd know my every thought and then you would understand me." She gave him back the rose with a little shiver. "You'd know that I am only a poor, weak woman, after all, and—that—that I am just a brute animal who loves and worships you, who would lick the ground at your feet." She slid from his knee down to the floor beside him, catching his hand and covering it with kisses.

He bent over her and the poet in him thrilled to the beauty in her. For an instant, too, he seemed to understand her. She was a wonderful being, this wife of his. "Strange, strange creature of loveliness, shall I tell you the fancy which you have called up?"

Her whole attitude showed dejection. She appeared to be crying softly there, her head upon his knee, a poor, tired child. "I am listening, my husband, listening," she whispered. "Tell me."

There was some witchcraft in the hour and he was under the spell of it, or else he was a greater poet than he guessed. "Thousands upon thousands of years roll back," he began, and even to himself he seemed to be repeating something that he had heard. "I am standing with the great and mighty Diana, watching from aloft over Latium. Æneas and his Trojans do I see, fair Dido in her regal state, yet woman to the heart, brave Achates, young Ascanius and all the mighty band pass by in great review. Then with a magic wand Diana sweeps the field and naught see I but Metabus, Camilla's father, once a king, now but a man. Pursued he comes to the o'erflown Amasenus, his pursuers hot upon his heels. A prayer to Diana he breathes, then binds he his infant child upon his spear and tosses his weapon charged

with human freight across the flood. So plunges he headlong into the stream, comes safely out and takes his unharmed child. Long years he cares for her, brought up a huntress and a handmaid to Diana. In spotless purity she cherishes the love of armor and of maidenhood. Then once again with magic wand back we go to the battlefield. Valiant she proves her worth, her training and her birth, until a traitor's spear cuts short the splendor of her life. Diana's eyes are bathed in tears and so are mine. A mighty fight, enough to turn the Trojan hosts. Alas, that she ran counter unto fate!"

The words died upon his lips, or the voice seemed to slip from his lips to hers, for what she said was like a continuation. "Glorious days of eternal youth were those, my Godfrey. Oh, that I might have lived them, for I can feel them still, when the gods whispered in our ears and Elysium was just beyond the hillock there!"

Into the coil of her hair he fastened the rose. "So the rose is yours by right now, Camilla. I place it in your hair."

She looked up at him. The frightened look had come back. "Godfrey," she said seriously, "do you think a soul might be bound to a spear and be tossed over a swollen stream? Do you think a heart might fight its battle under the sign of Diana, yet with Vulcan's smithy sounding through every artery?" She caught herself with a laugh, her seriousness probably calling forth her humor. "Funny, wasn't that?" She leaned back. "Come, Godfrey, you haven't fastened my collar yet." He helped her clumsily, as men will, made all the more clumsy by her rubbing her cheek against his hand as he fussed. "And now," she said when he had finished, "I am ready for that awful breakfast."

"We have shamefully neglected our guests," he answered.

They had, for the "guests" had quite finished breakfast and were there in the room. Helen went quickly up to Camilla. "Forgiven without reservation," she said, and offered her lips, puckered for a kiss.

"Good morning," answered Camilla to the words; and to the pursed lips she added: "It's so absurd for two women to kiss. Like two positive poles in an electric battery—lots of bubbles, but no current." In the laugh which followed the quip she escaped the embrace.

"You're just back from your ride and you must be famished," said Helen in her best "tactful" manner, a combination of condescension and *grande dame*.

"I have been back a long, long time," answered Camilla. "I have had such a lovely talk with Godfrey, have done lots and lots of things, and changed my gown—"

"Changed your gown?" broke in Helen, who always took but the high points of conversation, the word "gown" being a very lofty one.

"All of Camilla's summer dresses," explained Flaire, "are really riding habits, no matter for what occasion designed."

"Now, Godfrey," protested Camilla. Then as she saw the rise to Helen's eyebrows: "Well, you see, you never can tell when you may want to ride, and when you do you can't bear to lose a second. It may be now; it may be this afternoon; it may be tonight."

"Then you ride as much as ever, Camilla?" said Thornton, who had lingered in the background.

Camilla turned quickly. "You there, John?" she said, pronouncing his name again with the elongated vowel. "Yes, just as much as ever. Used to have great times, you and I, eh?"

Helen became at once very much interested. "Did you and John ever ride together?" she asked eagerly. Not that Helen was in the slightest jealous. In fact, she had not the capacity for jealousy; hurt vanity would be as near as she could approach it. Besides, after conventional people have been married ten years, jealousy becomes a fiction, a second romance to kindle anew a flagging flame. Helen would like to have been jealous or even to fancy a jealousy. Yet it was rather hard when the woman in the case was like Camilla, who was now standing there blowing into the petals of the

rose which she held in her hand, her eyes darting flashes now and then from their shaded depths.

"Did John never tell you?" she asked slowly.

"He was saying something about it this morning," broke in Flaire. "The memory seemed rather vivid, too, and not altogether pleasant, eh, John?"

"Telling about our ride?" What was that quality which suddenly crept into her voice, so soft, so seductive and yet so brittle? "Funny, wasn't it?"

"Very—very," answered Thornton, and again began to grow uneasy.

"What was it, John?" asked his wife.

"Nothing—it was nothing." He turned and walked farther into the conservatory.

"Nothing!" The word fairly struck the air and brought the attention of all. She still stood there as before, apparently absorbed in the flower.

"At least, nothing now," said Thornton, almost with pleading in his voice. "Shall we go for a walk?"

"Nothing now?" Camilla was smiling, and the others, thinking it only some joke, were enjoying Thornton's discomfiture.

"I have quite forgotten it," said Thornton, gazing boldly at Camilla, just the slant of whose eyes he could see, because of the inclined position of her head.

"Quite?" She was impaling him as a scientist does a beetle upon a pin.

"Tell us about it, Camilla," broke in Helen. "John seems somewhat timid."

"It was a long time ago," said Camilla, almost as if she were speaking to herself, "before we all married and settled down to— What did you used to call it, John?" She waited an instant for a reply, and when she got none went on, "Vegetate was what you used to say, I think. Perhaps you have forgotten, too, that there was a wager." The brittleness was creeping more and more into her voice.

"It's growing interesting," put in Flaire jokingly. "A wager? What was it?"

"Ask John," replied Camilla.

"I don't remember"—he caught Camilla's eye—"now. It was one of those youthful escapades. It might have been anything." There could be no doubt now that Thornton, the highly respected Thornton, was feeling most uncomfortable. All of which apparently delighted Camilla.

"An escapade?" she queried. "And it might have been anything, eh? And"—she held the word a second—"you lost."

"Of course he paid," put in Helen. It was so typically Helen to be punctilious in her obligations.

"I did," answered Thornton ominously. "I paid in full. We are quits, Camilla." He was trying to draw her away from the subject. Why would she persist in calling up these unpleasant things? If she must do such a thing, she might at least wait until they were alone and . . . Her eyes were upon him. "Didn't I pay?" he asked eagerly.

"Did you?" she returned by way of answer, and before he could speak, "I wonder—I wonder."

"Wonder what?" Why did she persist in gazing at him that way?

"I wonder if you would dare to race with me again?"

He started, all agitated, while Helen and Flaire laughed at him. "No, thank you," he exclaimed, "no, thank you!"

"It might be fun," ventured Camilla. "I'd rather like to try it again after all these years."

"Not with me," he said firmly. "Once was enough."

"You see," said Flaire, "he's not so proud of his riding these days, and as he says, he's taking on flesh, Camilla."

"Yes," she answered slowly, "flesh." She went up to him and stood before him. "I wonder if you remember our last ride?"

If she would only stop looking at him, if he could only draw away from her eyes. "Too well, Camilla, I am afraid. That's one of the things I will remember, that and—your eyes." He felt himself going beyond his depth, but he

could not hold back. He knew that his wife and friend were watching him and yet was drawn by a power he did not understand, a power greater than himself.

"My eyes, eh?" she said, placing their full glory upon him.

"As they are looking at me now," he murmured.

Flaire made a step toward his wife, suddenly realizing, too, that the joke had become serious. Helen also went closer. Camilla seemed to notice neither and Thornton saw just Camilla.

"It was a great race, John," she said, with growing intensity, "and a worthy wager. It was the best race I ever ran. I have always felt that I owed it to you, that somehow I did not win quite fair. You remember how the dew sparkled on the grass tips like liquid diamonds? The meadow larks were calling to each other across the fields. The frightened quail and grouse darted from our path. Out of the nostrils of our horses the breath was coming in long, narrow cones of steam. Through the air as if on wings we flew, faster and faster, hoofbeat on hoofbeat—"

"The devil's own pace," he murmured, caught now in her magic.

"Close down over the necks of our horses, the earth running green beneath us, clean into the morning, I flying a few paces before you—"

"A white phantom you seemed—"

"You following close behind—mad—mad—mad—"

"A soul accursed—"

"The thump of the hoofs upon the dry ground—the whistle of the horses' breath—the wind talking to us—the world calling to us—I hoping and fearing you would win—you crazed, your eyes red with the madness of the chase—not a word spoken—a weird, headlong flight—eternity and destiny gliding past us—two souls in a mad, tumultuous rout—" She grasped his hand. "John," she cried, "come and ride with me again!"

"Camilla, you mean—" he stutted.

"I mean now!" And before anyone could stop her, she called out through

the conservatory, "Saddle Susan and Kent at once!"

Flaire caught his wife by the shoulder. "Camilla," he exclaimed, "you're just back from a ride."

She flung herself from him. "What do I care, poet?" she demanded. "You have never felt life dashed into your face like a bucket of fresh spring water. Your life is a sickly hothouse growth. But we, John and I, we know; we have drunk life in gobletfuls."

"John, don't go with her," begged Helen, for once startled out of her dull veneer. "She is tired out, she is—" But Camilla stopped her.

"Tired out?" she said. "Look at the rose." It was the flower which Claire had given to her husband and which she had taken from him. She held it aloft. "As long as I have this no harm shall come. Godfrey, my little poet," she said somewhat more gently, "it is the rose which you gave me, and before I mount Susan I shall place it here in my bosom, so you, too, shall ride with me."

"John, John," begged Helen, quite in panic, "for my sake don't go with her. I am afraid. For my sake, John!"

Camilla faced her. "Neither for your sake nor for anyone else's can he stop this morning." The hostler came to say the horses were ready. "Go and tell Susan," half shouted Camilla, "that I come to ride as I have never ridden before."

One last attempt made Helen. "John, John," she pleaded.

"Your hand," said Camilla to Thornton; "the horses are saddled. We race again, you and I, for the old wager. Will you come?"

"Go on," he said hoarsely, "I'll follow if it's to the devil!"

"To the devil it is then!" And together they dashed out through the plants.

Flaire sat in the corner, his head in the cup of his hands. He seemed stunned, unable to collect his thoughts. Helen stood at the conservatory entrance gazing out toward the stable

yard. At times she gasped for breath as if her clothing were too tight about her waist. A nervous pulling off of her rings from one finger to place them upon another, together with a reversal of the performance, indicated her intense nervousness. Then, after a pause, "Godfrey!" Evidently he did not hear. "Godfrey!"

"Eh?" He looked up dazed.

"What was the wager for which John and Camilla raced?"

"I don't know." A sudden quick exclamation from Helen. "What is it?"

"The horse has just kicked over a stable boy— Oh, Godfrey!" He came running up, but she stood in his way, holding him back. "Don't look, Godfrey, don't look!"

"What is it?" He struggled to free himself. "Helen, what is it? Let me go—"

"Camilla," she murmured, sobbing, "Camilla."

"Camilla! Great God!" and he darted away from her only to meet them already coming through the conservatory. Thornton and the butler were carrying her. There was no question that she was badly hurt, but she was not unconscious. Her eyes sought her husband's and her hand went out weakly toward his. They placed her upon the couch, Flaire kneeling beside her, breathless and anxious.

"Camilla, speak to me," he begged.

"Run for the nearest doctor," said Thornton to the butler. He was the old Thornton again.

She looked tenderly at her husband, at Helen, who was fussing about her, wanting to undo her bodice and apply smelling salts, at Thornton standing over her, and again at Flaire. "Tell them to leave us," she whispered. Thornton and his wife went slowly toward the door. "It was not a fair wager the first time, John," she said as they were passing out, "and this time you won." The door closed behind them. "Little poet, little poet," she sighed, "I am going to tell you now."

"I know. I know all." He felt that

she was growing delirious and he was trying to soothe her.

"I knew," she went on, her voice coming in a whisper, "I knew that some day Susan would kill me and to-day I knew it all the more, for her eyes looked red. But I would not give in; I couldn't do that. There was something the matter, too. Do you know what it was, Godfrey? It was this." She placed his hand upon her bosom. "Can't you feel it there? The red rose? It is sticking into my flesh, your rose and mine, Godfrey. Godfrey, sit on the couch and let me lean my head again on your knee and look up again into your eyes." He wanted to call someone, but felt that he must humor her, so he did as she asked. "They are God's eyes, Godfrey," she sighed, "and so I am going to ask. May I keep the rose?"

It was just then that Claire returned. She had heard and she had rushed in to see her sister. Now that she was in the room she could not go a step farther. She tried to speak, but her tongue refused its duty. She could only stand there motionless, an eavesdropper so unwillingly.

"The rose is yours always, Camilla," he said.

"Always?" She caught at the word, smiled at it.

"As long as you can think it."

"That is long." The smile spread over her face. "That is through crystal sphere after crystal sphere, on milk-white horses shod with fire, flying past stars and planets, shooting through the sky like some strange meteor, you and I—and—Claire!" She emphasized the last word.

"I am here," said Claire, mastering all her force.

"Claire!" called Claire in surprise.

"I knew that you were," said Camilla. "Come near to me, Claire."

She rushed up to her, crying like a child, kneeling beside her. "Sister, Camilla darling," she sobbed.

"All Claire, everything but a soul, I guess. Godfrey"—she looked up at him—"Claire has all the soul; there was none for me. I give you my soul that

is in her. Dear little poet and dear little soul. You two shall live like the spirit of spring, and I shall die like the flowers of spring. Don't cry, Claire; you are his as I am—only today I rule alone. It is my last day. Go away, sister. Go now."

Claire bent over and kissed her upon the lips. Then she rose and went slowly to the door. Just as she reached it Camilla called to her: "Good-bye, Sis."

"Good-bye, Camilla," she said and went out.

"At last we are alone," she cried, some exuberance coming back, "my little poet and his wife. Lift me up, Godfrey."

"You are too weak, Camilla," he protested.

"Lift me up, please," she begged.

"But Camilla—"

"Lift me up." He drew her tenderly to a sitting posture. "Don't you see, I can hold your arms about me and I can lean my head upon your breast and hear your heartbeats. Godfrey," she said slowly, "do you think you could tell me one of your poems now, something to make the time pass quickly, something to make one forget?"

He felt that she was only semiconscious, yet he knew that he must do as she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"You are sure?" she queried plaintively.

"Sure. Shall I begin?"

"One moment first." Out from her bodice she took the rose. "Feel, Godfrey, it is all warm from my flesh. Let us place it between our cheeks. Now whisper the story in my ear."

Low he whispered it and she repeated it aloud: "Out through the bogs and the mire, steeped in the brush and the quag, came flying a butterfly, butterfly dainty, butterfly gay. 'Butterfly, Butterfly,' so sang a reed, 'come live with me.' Down on the reed the butterfly lighted. Full o'er the swamp the butterfly swung and then—then Mister Butterfly saw that his beautiful coat was all spotted

and soiled. Off flew Mister Butterfly, off whither a pond lily called him. 'Butterfly, Butterfly,' so sang the lily—"

And there she stopped him. "Oh, Mr. Poet, I know the rest of your story. God kissed the clay and made a soul. But, oh, those un-kissed clay forms that wander in the darkness and the mire, they stumble and they fall until they, too, receive the kiss! Only one more ride for me, Godfrey, just one

more, until I fall in heaps at His feet. Do you think that He will kiss me? Will you, Godfrey?"

"My poor, poor Camilla," he whispered, his lips pressing upon hers, already growing cold now.

"No," she cried, her eyes brilliant with light, luminous with the beauty of tenderness, "rich now, richer than ever—mine at last—mine, Godfrey—mine."

And that was all.



THE AUGUST SEA

By ARCHIBALD SULLIVAN

OH, the mumble, mumble, mumble,
Where the breakers crash and crumble,
Where the clouds are on the tumble
And the sun's as bold as brass;
Where the sand and surf's a-jumble,
Where the waves start all a-humble,
Then come racing with a rumble
From the sea of sapphire glass.

Oh, the lifting, lifting, lifting,
Of the curling foam that's shifting,
And the distant white-winged drifting
Of the yachts across the bay;
And the blood-warm sand a-shifting
And in tiny mountains rifling,
And the sunshine gone a-gifting,
Quivering diamonds on the spray.

Oh, the sounding, sounding, sounding,
Of the little breezes grounding,
And their sudden upward bounding
Like young hounds across the sand;
And the greenish seaweeds mounding,
And with tingling scents surrounding
Every wave that comes in pounding
Heavy secrets to the land.

Oh, the falling, falling, falling,
Of the shadows half appalling,
And the voice of dusk a-calling
Like a shipwrecked ghost and pale;
And the sun from golden walling
Flags of crimson downward hauling,
Then the hand of night a-shawling,
Darkened fringe on every sail.

THE WIDOW'S WORTHLESS CHEQUE

By WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

THE face of Alderdice was flushed. His eye was unnaturally bright. With his strong right arm he pressed the dainty head of Aline Ormsby to his breast; his left hand clasped her bare white shoulder.

"The happiest man in the whole world," he murmured, his voice shaking with emotion; "the loveliest woman in the universe."

The Widow lifted up her face to his and looked him squarely in the eyes, a glance of suppliant appeal that lifted him into the seventh heaven of delight. She clung to him feverishly, insistently, ecstatically.

"I want to tell you something, dear," she said in low musical tones that sent the life surging through his veins, "something that is true—something that you must believe. I have been married once before, it's true—married—but this is my first love affair."

"I do believe it," he returned; "I—I somehow knew it without your telling me . . ." His voice trailed off into a subdued tremolo. "To think you're mine—mine!"

She drew him to his seat beneath the huge palms. She took both his hands in hers.

"Yes," she returned eagerly, "I want to be all yours—part of your life—as necessary to you as your daily bread. I want to sink myself in you. I want to know you, dear, and all about you. I want to know all your people. They must be my people; I must be of them. I want your friends to be my friends. I want to know your friends."

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She paused for an instant as though deep in thought, and then insistently repeated: "I want to know and love—your friends."

This happened in the conservatory of J. Stanley Storme's big house. It happened to the tune of the melody of stringed instruments that filtered in from the veranda. It happened in the midst of the agreeable confusion of many voices that came drifting in from the ballroom—for this was one of Mrs. Stanley Storme's big nights. The dance was on; the joy was unconfined.

Suddenly Aline Ormsby started and released herself from the grasp of Alderdice. "Have you—any idea," she faltered, a bit sheepishly and uncertainly, "as to the—time?"

Alderdice took out his watch. He grinned. "It's only ten minutes after two," he said.

She shivered guiltily. "And we've been sitting here for three full hours," she whispered.

"Hours that passed like minutes, dear," he ventured.

"Faster than that," she answered, sighing. "Oh, life has been so dreary—until now."

On the top floor in the smoking room Jonathan Byrne, the portly broker, struggled into his overcoat, disposed of his last cocktail and lit a fresh cigar.

"Now, where in thunder," he commented genially to Stackpoole and Jennings, his bosom cronies, who were doing likewise, "where in thunder is that man Alderdice? We were all going to sit in a friendly little game that I

fixed up down at the Iroquois. And we were going to quit here at twelve, and start in there at one. And here it's half past two. Where the dickens is he?"

Stackpoole, of the law firm of Stackpoole, Brown & Ernst, drew down the corners of his mouth. "Don't *you* know?" he queried. "Well, come on—overcoats and all—and we'll find out."

Halfway down the stairs Byrne, the broker, caught him by the arm. "You don't mean to say," he choked, "that after all these years he's—spooning! What, Alderdice?"

Jennings, the insurance man, echoed Stackpoole's utterance. "We'll find out," he said grimly. Hastily, regardless of etiquette or of waltz or two-step, they pushed through room after room without success. They made inquiries without success. No one had seen Alderdice. A fair debutante, with the *gaucherie* of her kind, jerked her thumb over her shoulder.

"Try the orchids," she suggested. But they didn't try the orchids. It was hardly necessary. No sooner were the words out of her mouth than from the bower of palms and orchids there emerged two people, a man and a woman. Alderdice's face was still feverish and flushed; that of Aline Ormsby was unusually calm. As the two emerged from the place of green and growing things, the three cronies held their breath with sheer admiration at the woman's beauty. She was dark, lithe, full-bosomed; her eyes were lustrous with excitement, possibly with triumph. And yet upon her was that air of pathetic expectation, appeal, that clutched the heart of every man who looked upon her. For within her grasp the Widow Aline Ormsby held and clutched the thing called magnetism.

"By thunder!" ejaculated Byrne, the broker, "it's the Widow Ormsby! He's got her!"

"She's got him, you mean," corrected Jennings.

Stackpoole drew a sharp intake of breath. "By George!" he said in a

low voice. "I only wish I could have her for myself."

The music ceased. The dancers stopped. Instinctively everybody in the room turned toward the two who stood framed in the tropic archway of the room of palms. An electric thrill passed from guest to guest. Suddenly the debutante who had spoken to the three old cronies ran through the crowd, and holding out her hands looked into the faces of the Widow and of Alderdice. The Widow smiled a heavenly smile and lowered her eyes. The debutante clapped her hands.

"Why," she gasped, her voice pleasantly shrill with quivering excitement, "they're engaged—*engaged!*" Her voice deepened into awe as the presence of love quickened her words.

Ten minutes later the three cronies stalked gravely down the street—*sans* Alderdice.

"How old is Alderdice?" suggested Byrne.

"Just turned forty," answered Stackpoole.

"Thought he was older than that," said Jennings.

Stackpoole shook his head. "He was just thirty-eight when they made him president of the Manufacturers National—a bit more than two years ago. Give him time. He'll grow young, now, right along. My great—a wife like that!"

Stackpoole hooked a hand into the elbows of his friends and brought them up standing on the corner of a street. "Say, look here, gentlemen," he queried, "tell me something. Who is this Widow Ormsby anyhow?"

The witnesses declined to answer, and for a good and sufficient reason—they didn't know. The Widow Ormsby had made her advent into town eight months before—had installed herself in a cozy, comfortable apartment in the Aldine—had made her entrance upon the arena of social events. That was all. Her personal magnetism had done the rest.

"There's one thing I'm informed," suggested Byrne a little dubiously; "I understand she's rich!"

It was six months later. It was upon a Saturday afternoon. Jennings, of insurance fame, sat comfortably in his private office, his feet cocked up upon the table, satisfied, after a hard week's work. There was a gentle tap upon his door.

"Come in," yelled Jennings genially, still with his feet upon the table. The door was pushed stealthily open, and a woman entered. Jennings blushed, leaped to his feet and placed a chair.

"Mrs. Ormsby," he exclaimed delightedly. He grinned. "Does—does Alderdice know that you are out?" he queried.

The Widow Ormsby opened her little leather bag and fumbled in its depths. She produced a long, narrow slip of paper.

"That's just it," she returned; "I can't find him. He's to meet me at the train this afternoon to see me off—but I've been looking for him all the afternoon. And I'm in an awful fix."

"Going away?" asked Jennings.

The Widow smiled into his eyes. "You know about our wedding," she returned. He nodded, and held up a fat, square, white envelope that was lying on his desk. "Two weeks from next Wednesday," she admitted, "and I have had so much to do—so much to think about. This is my last trip to New York for the—trousseau—and accessories and such." She held up the narrow slip of paper.

"The banks are all closed, Mr. Jennings," she went on, agreeably confused. "I have looked for Mr. Alderdice everywhere. I suspect he's ransacking town to get me some orchids. And I left *this*—till the last minute. Forgot all about it." She stopped uncertainly, and then flung out her arms in a feminine appeal. "Have you any cash?" she asked.

"Why, to be sure," replied the eager Jennings. He seized the cheque that she held toward him and glanced at it casually.

"Five hundred!" he exclaimed.

She nodded. "So foolish of me to leave the most important thing until the very last," she said.

Jennings stepped to his big safe,

fumbled with the combination and threw back the doors. The Widow's eyes followed his every move. He opened the money box, drew out a pack of bills, counted out half of them and put the balance back.

"Always glad to accommodate you, Mrs. Ormsby," he remarked, passing her five hundred dollars in legal tender and pocketing her cheque. "In fact, there's only one thing that I've got against you—you're going to marry Alderdice."

"But—" she faltered, not quite understanding.

"Instead of me," he added. She blushed prettily, held out her hand and pressed his with the grasp of genuine friendship.

"Thanks ever so much," she said. "And I've got to go. I'm in a terrible, terrible hurry. I've got *such* a lot of things to do this afternoon—you don't know . . ." She nodded swiftly to him over her shoulder and was gone.

After a long interval of comfortable contemplation, aided by the flavor of a fine cigar, Jennings stirred himself. He took from his wallet the cheque she had handed to him and scanned it casually. Suddenly he started.

"That's a funny thing," he said to himself aloud. "This cheque is on the Iron Bank—not on the Manufacturers. Women are a queer lot, after all. Now, why the dickens don't she deposit in Alderdice's bank, the Manufacturers? I don't suppose *that* ever entered her head." He replaced the cheque and sighed. "Oh, he's a lucky dog, that Alderdice!" he murmured to himself.

The Widow Ormsby left Jennings's private office, entered her cab, drove down the street for four blocks and turned two blocks west on Market. She swiftly entered the Lawyers Building, ascended in the elevator and pushed her way into the offices of Stackpoole, Brown & Ernst. There was one man waiting for her—Stackpoole.

"Mr. Stackpoole," she gasped in her haste, "my time is limited, you know. Have you got my deed made out?"

Stackpoole smiled sadly. "At any rate," he sighed, "I'm glad to see the

Stackpoole homestead go into such good hands. I'll tell you, Mrs. Ormsby," he went on confidentially, "you're getting a bargain."

"Don't I know it?" she answered gleefully. "To my mind, it's the *one* house in town—and it's mine, it's mine . . ."

Stackpoole pressed his finger tips together and frowned a troubled frown. "It wouldn't be yours, Mrs. Ormsby," he returned, "if it wasn't for the fact that my creditors are . . ." He ran his hand through his tousled, worried hair. "Well," he groaned, "they really are . . . you know . . . I've got to sell. If I didn't have to, you couldn't have the homestead, not at any price. Unless," he added gallantly, his eye brightening, "unless *you* should happen to be part and parcel of the consideration. But that is out of the question now, since Alderdice—"

The Widow interrupted him. She had been glancing at the deed that he had offered her. She uttered an exclamation of disappointment. "Oh, Mr. Stackpoole," she protested, "you've made this out to me!"

"Of course," he answered; "you're buying it."

"But," she went on, flushing a bit guiltily, "I—wanted to put it in another's name." She didn't say the name of Alderdice, though she implied as much. She hesitated for an instant, still flushing deeply. "If you *could* leave the grantee blank so that I might fill it in, I should be so much obliged."

Stackpoole gestured with annoyance—professional annoyance merely. A clever counselor at law, he was most vigilant with the matters of his clients, too careless with his own.

"Stenographers are all gone," he murmured. Then he seized an eraser, and energetically rubbed out the name of Aline Thurston Ormsby typewritten in the grantee's space, and tossed the deed to her again.

"That'll be all right," he said, soothingly. "It isn't according to Hoyle to make deeds in blank, and it's all wrong to erase anything—but it'll go. No-

body will ever question it. When you want *his* name put in—"

"Whose name?" laughed the Widow.

"Never mind," smiled Stackpoole; "when you do, why, bring it here and we'll insert it after the ceremony. The Stackpoole mansion is no slouch of a wedding present, Mrs. Ormsby—let me tell you that."

Mrs. Ormsby drew her chair up to the desk, pulled out a blank cheque and paused with pen in hand. "I owe you forty-seven hundred and sixty-eight dollars over and above the mortgage, I believe?" she queried. Stackpoole nodded, and hastily she wrote the amount upon the cheque, blotted it and passed it over.

"That's done," she sighed. She placed her deed in her bag and started off.

Stackpoole was glancing at the cheque. "Just one minute, Mrs. Ormsby," he exclaimed. There was no reason why he shouldn't take her cheque, he told himself. For his clients he would have insisted upon certification or cash, but for himself—well, Stackpoole was always Stackpoole, and always will be. Still, the bee of caution was buzzing feebly but insistently within his brain. He stepped into the next room, shut the door and sat down before the telephone. "I'd best make sure," he said.

He called up Alderdice, chiefly because there was no one else to call up. For a long while there was no response. Then suddenly Alderdice's breathless voice leaped from the midst of the murmur of the wire.

"Hello, old man. This is Stackpoole," said the lawyer.

"Oh!" gasped Alderdice. "Lucky you caught me. Been on the jump all afternoon, and just stepped in here for a minute. What's up, Stackpoole?"

Stackpoole lowered his voice. "Confidential," he returned. "I'm closing a little deal with Mrs. Ormsby—"

"What!" cried Alderdice in astonishment.

"Yes," laughed Stackpoole. "Never mind what it is. She doesn't want you

to know. But look here. I'm taking her cheque, see—for less than five—"

"Dollars?" queried Alderdice.

"Thousands," answered Stackpoole; "and look here—it's a queer thing to ask, but it's business. She's—she's good, good for the amount?"

Alderdice at the other end absolutely snorted. "Good—as gold," he answered.

That afternoon at five o'clock Aline Thurston Ormsby stood at the P. Q. & R. station as the express pulled in, and glanced with undisguised affection into the face of Alderdice, the young president of the Manufacturers Bank.

"You didn't get me my orchids, after all?" she queried.

He smote his forehead. "Forgot it, clean forgot it," he exclaimed. "I—I was so blamed busy about some other things. By the way," he added suddenly, "did you get a package from Solliday & Bowne?"

"Registered," she acquiesced. "It came just as I left the house."

"All aboard!" sang out the brakeman. "Al—I aboard!"

"Hurry out, dear," she exclaimed, for he had entered the chair car with her. "You—you may be carried on."

"That would be heaven," he laughed. His brow clouded. "If it wasn't that our wedding trip"—her eyes sought his for one brief instant—"if it wasn't that I'm going to be away so long next month, I'd go with you. But as it is . . ."

"As it is," she answered, "I shall return in one week from today. Until then—good-bye."

"*Au revoir*," he whispered. He was seized with an uncontrollable impulse to kiss her, but the car was too alive with curious eyes. He hastened to the exit and swung out on the platform as the train gathered speed. With wistful eyes he watched it recede into the distance.

"My wife to be," he said aloud rapturously, "my life—Aline . . . This week will seem ten years."

It was Monday afternoon. Jennings, the insurance man, tore open

absent-mindedly the letter that his boy had laid upon his desk. Casually, lazily, he glanced over its contents. Then he rubbed his eyes.

"What in thunder's *this*?" he asked himself. The missive answered him. The envelope contained a notice of protest, a brief business memorandum from the Iron Bank—and a cheque. The cheque was a five-hundred-dollar cheque, signed by Aline Thurston Ormsby. It was familiar in appearance to him. He had deposited it that very morning in that same Iron Bank, where he kept his own account. It was the cheque that he had cashed for her after banking hours on the Saturday before. But it was not the cheque that made him pause—it was the memorandum.

"No funds!" he whistled. "There must be some mistake!"

Hastily he rang up the Iron Bank and talked to the teller.

"Sure, we're right," returned the teller, "no funds. Of course, no funds."

"How much is her account overdrawn?" queried Jennings.

"Overdrawn!" returned the teller.

"Why, man, she never had an account with us—that's all. Sorry, Mr. Jennings," he commented, "but it looks like—"

"Stung," interposed Jennings, as he hung up the receiver.

He called up Mrs. Ormsby at the Aldine, but there was no response; her apartment evidently was closed. "Whom can I call up; whom can I see about it?" he wailed. A sudden impulse to ring up Alderdice was stifled as soon as it rose, and Jennings only sat back in his armchair that afternoon and fumed and fretted and perspired.

"Hang it all," he told himself, "I can't afford to lose five hundred dollars just at this time! Stung!" he snorted to himself. But he kept his counsel. He felt ashamed, disgraced. "I don't know," he thought, "that I'd better tell anybody about this thing—certainly not Stackpoole. Gee, how Byrne would howl! Stung!"

The next morning Stackpoole crept into Jennings's office. Deep lines were

upon the face of Stackpoole; deep trouble in his eyes.

"Jennings," he said, "I'm in a dickens of a hole. I need about six hundred to pull me out. I gave Willoughby G. Schenck—old rat-tailed file he is—my cheque for six-fifty this morning, and the bank notifies me I haven't got sufficient funds to meet it—only fifty dollars there, and Schenck is out after my hide. He even threatens arrest."

"He can't arrest for *insufficient funds*," said Jennings.

"I know he *can't*," groaned Stackpoole, "but the chances are he *will*."

Jennings opened wide his eyes. "How in thunder, Stack," he queried, "did *you* come to give a cheque for six-fifty with only fifty in the bank? That's something new for you!"

Stackpoole crossed to the window, flushing to his eyelids. Twice he came back to the desk and twice essayed to speak, but each time he crept back to the window and watched the passing throng. Finally, with a grunt of desperation, he tore a folded slip of paper out of his vest pocket, unfolded it and spread it before the eyes of Jennings.

Jennings looked at it, gave one gasp and leaped to his feet.

"Jumping Jerusalem!" he yelled. "Are you stung, too? Joy—joy—joy!"

Stackpoole turned pale and angry. "I don't see where the joy comes in," he retorted swiftly.

"You will see," cried Jennings, exhibiting his own security, "when you realize that while you are in for nearly five thousand, I'm only in for five hundred. Look, and rejoice with me."

Stackpoole stared at him aghast. "What—you too?" he gasped.

For a moment that seemed hours they looked each other in the eye.

"Whom have you told about it?" asked Jennings.

"Nobody," answered Stackpoole. "I was going to see Alderdice, but"—he shook his head feebly—"I couldn't tell *him*. And he told me she was good, too—as good as gold. But I can't hold him on his oral guaranty, and I wouldn't if I could."

"I was going to call up Alderdice, and I, also, could not," said Jennings. "I haven't told a soul—not even Johnny Byrne."

As though the utterance of his name had been a summons, the door opened and in lumbered Johnny Byrne. He sank weakly into a chair.

"Boys," he exclaimed, rushing at once to his climax, "kick me unconscious. I want to sleep and die. I sold ten thousand dollars' worth of negotiable bonds to a woman—*ten thousand dollars' worth!*—and took her cheque. She took the bonds; I took the cheque. She's got the bonds; I've got the cheque. I've got it still! It just came back to me! Kick me, please!"

Jennings, his good nature returning at the lightness of his own loss, made a few telepathic passes in the air in the direction of Byrne, the broker's, head.

"Something tells me," he announced dreamily, "that the woman in the case—your case—is Aline Thurston Ormsby. Am I right?"

Broker Byrne sprang to his feet. "How did *you* know?" he cried. "I haven't told a soul."

Jennings jerked his head. "Come now, and let us reason together," he suggested, laying flat upon the desk beneath the bulging gaze of Byrne the evidences of his own and Stackpoole's folly.

"Well, if that don't beat . . ." groaned Byrne.

They reasoned together. They laid the cheques out flat and examined them. Each was the same, save for its stamped number. Jennings's was number 1503, Stackpoole's 1504, Byrne's 1505.

"I'd rather have yours than mine," sighed Byrne to Jennings. Stackpoole said nothing; he merely glanced over his shoulder to see whether Willoughby G. Schenck, the rat-tailed file, was in the immediate vicinity; but as yet there was nothing to be feared.

"She's a snoozer," went on Byrne. "They are all Iron Bank cheques, every one, all out of a regular cheque book, and she's got her name engraved—

engraved, by heck, on the end of each!"

He jotted down a few figures on paper. "She's a wonder—that female proposition," he went on. "She's been in town about a year, and she's cleaned up over fifteen thousand dollars by a wave of the hand." He turned to Stackpoole. "By the way," he said, "*you* stand a show. She's got to record that deed to use it. *You* can file a bill in Chancery and forestall her."

Stackpoole nodded lazily. His energy had oozed from him. "So I could," he went on, "if old Schenck would give me half an hour to pull myself together. But—the Register's office is twenty miles away; the Clerk in Chancery is fifty. And the deed was made to *blank*."

"To—blank!" echoed Byrne.

"Sure," went on Stackpoole, "and all she's got to do is to fill in the name of John Doe or Richard Roe and record it, and then I've got to deal with Doe or Roe, and who are they—where are they? Just as like as not purchasers from her in good faith, too. A wedding present, she implied, for Alderdice." He leaned his head forlornly on his hand. "What am I to do with Schenck?" he wailed. "What am I to do?"

Byrne held up his hand. "Boys," he said solemnly, "shall we squeal—or keep it quiet—which?"

"We'll keep it quiet," returned Jennings. "If we squeal it does no good; we'll be the laughing stock of the town. If we keep quiet we have nothing to lose and much to gain. We'll put a plain clothes man upon her track, and possibly—"

Byrne shook his head. "*Somebody* ought to tell Alderdice," he cried. But Jennings and Stackpoole frowned that proposition down. "Not on your life!" they said.

Still Byrne was uneasy. "*Somebody* ought to tell him. *You*, Jennings."

"*Not*," said Jennings positively.

"*You*, Stackpoole?" Stackpoole resigned.

"*Somebody's* got to tell him," added

Byrne; "it's only right that he should know."

Boneset Smith, the best plain clothes man in the commonwealth, was put upon the job. He was warned against going to Alderdice. He made his inquiries quietly, steadily, persistently. He went to New York. He came back again.

"What have you got?" Jennings asked him at the end of a week. Boneset shook his head.

"Not a bloomin' thing," he answered, "exceptin' that everybody says she's coming back today."

Jennings snorted. "Coming back the next day after never," he said. "Smith, she's as slick as they make 'em, isn't she?"

"Slicker," was Smith's comment.

At this juncture Byrne burst into the room dragging Stackpoole with him. "Jennings," he announced, "I won't stand it a second longer. I'm going up to Alderdice. He *ought* to know at once—and you've got to come. Bring Smith along. We'll tell him all we know."

They went. Alderdice was in his private office at the bank, sitting comfortably back in his revolving chair, his face flushed with expectation. As they came in, a shimmer of disappointment crossed his face.

"I thought it might be—she," he said, smiling quite frankly, but with some confusion in his manner.

"By the way, Byrne," he went on, waving them all to seats, "I am ever so much obliged to you for attending to that transfer of the Interstate Preferred for me last week."

Byrne was puzzled. "What transfer?" he queried.

"Why, the transfer on the Interstate books of the Preferred from me to—*to Mrs. Ormsby*."

Byrne scratched his head. "Did you transfer some stock to her?" he queried. Alderdice smiled. "All I had—twenty-five thousand dollars' worth—a sort of prenuptial wedding gift. I wanted her to have it before I—I wanted her to know, to feel, before

we—married—that what was mine was hers."

He talked quite frankly, quite eagerly, as a man who was in the clutch of some tongue loosening excitement. "It won't be long now before the wedding, don't you see?"

Byrne clutched him by the arm. "But," he protested, "I didn't transfer any stock for you—I certainly did *not*."

Alderdice burst into a laugh. "I beg your pardon," he exclaimed. "It's my mistake. I was going to have *you* do it."

"Then," gasped Byrne in a relieved tone, "you *didn't* transfer the Interstate to her?"

"Oh, yes, I did," went on Alderdice carelessly, "but I did it through Solli-day & Bowne. I remember now. There wasn't any money in it, and I didn't want to bother you—that's all."

"And where is the stock now?" asked Byrne.

Alderdice spread his hands. "I suppose," he answered, "that Mrs. Ormsby has it in her safe deposit vault."

Byrne's lips formed sneeringly the words, "Safe deposit vault," but he spoke only with his eyes, and not to Alderdice—to Jennings and to Stackpoole.

Suddenly Alderdice rose from his chair. "Why, why," he cried rapturously, "this must be . . ."

They clustered about the window and watched—watched the cabby descend from his perch and open the door; watched a heavily veiled young woman leave the carriage, look nervously up and down the street; watched her make her entrance into the bank; waited for her to push open the door. Alderdice rushed forward. The young woman drew off her veil and held out her hand to him.

"Aline!" he exclaimed enthusiastically.

He was right. It was the Widow Ormsby. Boneset Smith, a man with private instructions from the Iron Bank, stepped forward and placed his hand upon her arm.

"Madam," he exclaimed, "you are under arrest."

"Arrest!" she echoed weakly. Her startled glance traveled from the face of Alderdice across the faces of all the others there. She smiled. "Arrested by my—*friends*," she said gaily. But the clutch of Boneset Smith deepened on her arm, and in the faces of every man save Alderdice she saw a savage joy—the joy of the man pack who hunt their kind.

Alderdice touched Smith upon the arm. "What's up?" he queried.

Smith grunted. "Lady's been passing fifteen thousand dollars' worth of worthless cheques," he answered.

"Worthless cheques!" gasped Alderdice. "Impossible!"

"But true, nevertheless," returned Jennings. "Smith is right. She's done us out of thousands with phony paper on the Iron Bank—and no account."

"What bank?" she asked.

They told her again. "Why," she said, "I have no account in the Iron Bank. I never have had one."

"If you admit that, it's as good as a confession," exclaimed Smith.

"And," she went on, "I never drew a cheque on the Iron Bank—never!"

For answer three grimly silent men thrust under her pretty nose three cheques. She looked at them aghast. "That's my signature," she said.

"You confess that, too," commented Smith.

She looked long and steadily at the cheques, long and steadily at the earnest, uninviting faces of the men before her. Finally she released herself from the hold of Smith and grasped his arm in turn.

"Everybody come up to my apartment in the Aldine," she commanded. "I can't talk here; but there—no"—she shook her head as Alderdice placed himself at her side—"this gentleman," nodding at the plain clothes man, "will ride with me. The rest of you can take the car. Good-bye." She rode off with her captive Smith. The three aggrieved ones looked each other in the eye. "Can Smith be *bought*?" they reasoned with themselves.

He wasn't bought to any great ex-

tent, so far as they could ascertain, for fifteen minutes later the whole coterie, Alderdice included—Alderdice in a dream of delight more than of doubt, for the Widow possessed him body and soul—were gathered about her little desk, Smith with his hand still upon her arm. The Widow opened the desk and drew out a large, flat cheque book.

"See for yourselves," she said.

"Why," gasped Alderdice, "that's one of *our* cheque books, the Manufacturers! That's not an Iron Bank book."

"Open it up," said Smith. He was obeyed. "Why—why," he said, "it's full of Iron Bank cheques!"

Alderdice pressed to the front. Smith was apparently right. There, facing the crowd, were three Iron Bank cheques, numbered 1506, 1507, 1508. Alderdice swiftly leafed the page. Then he uttered an exclamation of surprise. "All but *this* page," he exclaimed, "are *our* cheques." He laughed aloud in glee. "I see it all," he added. "The fool printer has inserted by mistake two pages of Iron Bank cheques in one of our books. We get our stuff for both banks done at Schmuck's job printing place. And Schmuck's man, drunk or otherwise, has mixed things up, evidently before the binding, as they've engraved her name on them, too." He placed his

arm around the Widow Ormsby. "Gentlemen," he smiled, "if you will permit my future wife to insert the name of *my* bank on those three cheques you hold, they will be honored at my bank. Mrs. Aline Thurston Ormsby's account with us is something over twenty thousand dollars, as it is," he added softly. "I thought you understood that I was marrying a wealthy wife."

The thousand-dollar silver service that the three cronies, Jennings, Stackpoole and Byrne offered up at the nuptial shrine was in reality a bribe—the price of silence. And the Widow Ormsby, now Aline Thurston Ormsby Alderdice, was susceptible to bribery. So was her husband. Only their eyes gleamed mockingly as the three victims passed before them after the ceremony, and Alderdice laid a detaining hand upon the arm of Stackpoole.

"My dear," he said to his glowing bride, "I think I ought to tell you that, a week before you bought it, my friend Stackpoole here offered to *me* the Stackpoole mansion for five hundred dollars less than *you* paid for it. What do you think of that?"

Mrs. Alderdice's eyes told Stackpoole that she was glad to have the Stackpoole homestead at any price, but her lips belied her glance.

"Stung—and by a man!" she gleefully exclaimed.



EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS

By GRACE HAZARD CONKLING

THOU art but silence here who wast my music dying—
 O Singer at the portals thy song may not uncloze—
 Yet silence breathing near to let me dream thee sighing
 As once thy voice was soul of every wind that blows!
 I would not have thee hear what word my heart is crying,
 Nor dare these radiant lands where not a violet grows:
 Thy April fields more dear than these beyond me lying,
 I scorn their asphodels who may not grasp thy rose.

ON EXTRAVAGANCE

By CHARLES BATTELL LOOMIS

"IF a man can spend twenty-five cents for a cigar and not feel it, he must be doing pretty well."

Did you say that, gentle reader? Well, if you didn't, you've often thought it.

But I don't know. Suppose a man spends twenty-five cents for cabbage in another form, and accompanied by corned beef, does that prove him to be well off?

It doesn't seem to me as if it made so much difference what a man spends his money for, as long as he has the money, and I can conceive of a man who had only twenty-five cents in the world, weighing carefully the respective merits of a dish of corned beef and cabbage and a "real Havana," and finally coming to the conclusion that a foregone dinner was a sort of tonic to the digestive organs. "Here, old pals, gastric juices and stomach, what do you say to a holiday today? Do what you will. I'll have no need of your services. Get rested up, and if Providence grants me the price of a square meal tomorrow I may reopen the plant, but for the present the mill is shut down. Make the most of your holiday, for it can't last forever unless I embrace immortality."

I can conceive of a man talking that way to a good-natured stomach and then going on to say: "Now this quarter spent for a mere meal will not benefit me for more than a few hours, and I never have cared for corned beef and cabbage, while, from the odor of Havana cigars smoked by various men in whose vicinity I have stood on ferry boats, I imagine that such a smoke

would content me and enable me to buck up and hunt for more quarters."

So he buys the Havana and smokes it with a sense of luxuriousness that your rich man never felt.

"If a man can spend twenty-five cents for a cigar and not feel it, he must be doing pretty well."

Rather ambiguous, that sentence, but I think I understand your meaning.

We will suppose that tobacco is not new to the man, so he won't feel it in a bad sense, and he certainly is doing very well, penniless as he is, to stake his last quarter on a smoke.

But we are all of us apt to feel that a certain sum spent for a certain thing is extravagance, while the same sum expended for something else is not undue extravagance on the part of an almost pauper.

Well, here is Macænas Junior, spends seventy-five dollars for a dinner with wine and gets so befuddled at it that next day he is not sure whether he dined at all, but he has a dim recollection that some lobster disagreed with him.

How wildly extravagant to spend so large a sum and get so little for it! No man but a millionaire would ever do such a thing.

Still, I'm not sure that we won't find that Jack M. Pekunios, who is glad to make a thousand dollars a year by the sale of his landscapes, has not spent just the same amount and got as little for it.

He had a year's lease of his house, for which he paid twenty-five dollars a month, and on the first of June he left it and went down to Provincetown

to paint for three months. But his rent for his unused house went on just the same. He handed out seventy-five dollars for not even a dinner with wine. He didn't try to sublet it. Said it would be too much bother.

Charles Outwalter, a friend of mine, whose income is less than two thousand dollars a year—and he is married—did what some of his friends thought a wildly extravagant thing, when he spent eight hundred dollars for a second-hand automobile. He paid for it, too, which is more than some of these limousine runners are doing.

But, even as the man who went without his dinner in order to have one decent smoke before he starved to death did a wise thing, so Outwalter showed himself to be a man of wisdom.

He and his wife and their son ran the automobile up into New England and camped out alongside of it every night. Outwalter is a story writer, and he spent each morning under some tree or by some purling brook (he dotes on brooks of the purling kind) knocking out stories on his little Blick. At noon he and his wife would go fishing for lunch, sometimes in the brook, sometimes at the tail end of the wagon of an itinerant butcher, who was glad to sell them three or four chops. Then they'd cook their lunch under some umbrageous oak (dear old adjective, that!). And in the afternoon they would explore the country in the motor car, and always managed to stop at night in some sylvan spot where the imagination was tickled and where sleep came easily and naturally and Dr. Openair administered ozone to them all night long.

You remember what a spell of fair weather we had last summer. The Outwalters made the most of it, and all three thrived on their outdoor life and the absence of carking care. (Care is bad enough, but the carking kind is the worst variety known.)

Now I claim that Outwalter was not extravagant in spending eight hundred dollars for that automobile. He got the worth of his money.

Old Alexander Q. Croesus has the

notion that he hasn't much time for pleasure, so he and his wife—who is deaf—go to the Opera but once in a season, and it costs them ten dollars.

Little Eleanor Shaminart—whose name belies her, for she is genuine clear through, and if she ever gets her talent discovered I believe that she has a future as a pianist that may rival the past of Madame Chaminard—has lots of time in the evenings, but she hasn't much money. Yet she spends just as much on the Opera as Croesus does, only she gets fifty-cent seats and goes twenty times.

Anyone can afford anything if he thinks he can.

Jennerblyt pays a hundred dollars a month for his house, and his wife dresses so well that she is the envy of many of the women of the suburban town in which the Jennerblyts live, but he does not feel that he can afford to have either oranges or cream for breakfast. Two hundred dollars for a gown for his wife does not seem extravagant to him, because he likes to feel that she is well dressed, but twenty-five cents a day for oranges and ten cents a day for cream is a little more than he can afford.

Appyboy, on the other hand, whose wife dresses in her Cousin Delia Grahame's clothes the year after Cousin Delia buys them, has oranges every day of his life and a deluge of cream. He calls them absolute necessities, and when you call a thing an absolute necessity you've got to have it, that's all.

My friend with the quarter, who figured in the early portion of this essay, felt that a Havana cigar was an absolute necessity, and so it was not extravagant in him to buy it and reduce it to smoke and ashes and a pleasant memory. The fictitious gentleman who spent the summer with his equally fictitious wife and child in a fictitious automobile felt that he had to have it, and so it was not extravagant.

In writing this I felt that I had to have those incidents—they were absolute necessities and I should not call them extravagant. If it didn't all

happen that way it might easily have done so, and I'm sure I wish it had, because there is something picturesque to me in the thought of a man on his uppers looking disdainfully at a greasy cardboard sign in a window bearing the legend "Corn beef and cabbage 25 cts.," the while he puffs gloriously on a twenty-five-cent cigar called a Havana.

Or do you like "an Havana" better?

And if Mr. Outwalter had existed and had spent a summer in the way I said he did (how mendacious writers are!), I am sure he would have had much more to be thankful for than that odious Macenas Junior, who blew into a restaurant where he subse-

quently blew in seventy-five dollars for something he did not want.

Don't be extravagant, but try to get what you want when you want it, because that plan, if not carried to excess, will leave you with pleasant memories.

It may possibly lead you to the poorhouse eventually, but I leave it to any fair-minded person whether a man of contentment living in a well-ventilated poorhouse, where the food is good and costs him nothing, is not better off than dyspeptic old Croesus at the age of seventy-five in his gorgeous architectural abomination on Fifth Avenue waiting for an Angel of Death who is behind time.



RED ROSES

By THEODOSIA GARRISON

WHEN first I saw the Road of Love,
Whereon I longed to tread,
Methought 'twas strewn from end to end
With roses, roses red.

Yet when myself I walked the road,
No roses there I knew;
These but red footprints on the path,
Wherein I followed, too.

Oh, weary is the Road of Love,
For all it seemeth fair,
And weary, weary are the feet
That leave red roses there.

And would to those who follow me
Some warning I might say—
Yet I myself once only saw
Red roses all the way.



THE apple may have been the chief source of wisdom in the days of Eve, but the modern man learns all he wants to know and a little bit more from a "peach."

THE STRONGER POWER

By HAWTHORN CAMPBELL

"KIRSTY, is that the station fly?" Cynthia cried, in tones of suppressed excitement.

She was running lightly down the short staircase from her room to the hall, clasping her belt with agitated fingers.

"It's the soond o' wheels, onyway, Miss Cynthia," the old woman answered, bursting out of the tiny, spotless kitchen.

"Oh, Kirsty, it's not the fly," Cynthia said, and her voice was full of keen disappointment. "It's only the baker's van."

"He's aye the same, that baker," the old woman returned with marked asperity. "When ye havena a loaf in the hoose he gangs by like a moose; but when ye've mair than ye can use, an' ye're listenin' for onybody else, he'll clatter along like a road engine. 'But,' she cried, her face becoming radiant, 'here's the fly this time—an' there's the bairn wavin' oot o' the windy, I declare! Eh, it seems like a century since she went away.'"

"Kirsty"—there were tears in Cynthia's gray eyes—"I'll never let her go away again. This month has been almost unbearable."

As she finished speaking the fly entered the lane in which Cynthia's cottage was situated, and when it pulled up with a flourish she was at the tiny wooden garden gate, the summer breeze ruffling her hair, the sunshine streaming into her deliriously happy face.

But as the occupant of the fly descended the light died out of the girl's eyes and a little cry escaped her. A terrible fear had laid hold of her palpitating heart.

"Where's Sophie, Edith? Is she ill?"

The question came in an unsteady whisper from lips grown suddenly white.

"Why, Cynthia darling, how I've frightened you!" the newcomer cried in alarm, gathering the girl into her arms. "Sophie is as right as rain. She's coming tomorrow, and I'm here at her request to tell you why. We all thought a wire might frighten you—and I believe I've frightened you more, little Miss Gravity."

When she got thus far, Kirsty, who had been listening intently in the back-ground, swung round in a fury and clattered back to the kitchen.

"I micht have expected naethin' better where that flighty lass is concerned," she told herself, fiercely poking the fire. "Some daft capers they're up tae, I'll warrant. I kenno hoo Miss Cynthia can thole sic a gipsy. A mair-rit wumman should hae mair tae dae than gallivantin 'an' amusin' hersel' frae morn tae night."

By this time both girls were upstairs in Sophie's bedroom chattering volubly and gaily on topics of mutual interest, or on anything, in fact, but the reason of Sophie's delayed arrival. Edith refused absolutely to enter into particulars until she had rid herself of the dust and stains of travel and been fortified by tea and some of "Kirsty's delicious scones." Had she known how grudgingly that person brought them in she might have been less enthusiastic.

"Now, Cynthia," she cried, when the tea and scones had been duly appreciated and the girls were seated side by side at the open window of the dainty

little drawing-room, "for my story. You've been most angelic in your patience, but when you hear everything I'm sure you'll agree it's been worth waiting for, Cynthia." Edith became a little breathless. "Sophie is engaged to be married! It's all worked up to this delightful climax under my roof, and I'm perfectly delighted. He's a splendid catch, dear—bags of money, and a Colonial. Colonials are such lovely men, Cynthia."

"Are they?"

Cynthia could think of nothing else to say. She was stunned by the news so unexpectedly thrust upon her, and instead of being "perfectly delighted," as Edith was, she was conscious of a tightness at throat and heart. Little Sophie engaged to be married! And she had never known she anticipated such a step! The girl who during the short eighteen years of her life had confided absolutely in her had made such a momentous decision and had never told her!

"Aren't you glad, Cynthia?" Edith's bright, rattling voice was full of dismay. "I thought you'd have been so glad, dear—and so grateful."

"I'm just a little taken aback, Edith. Of course, I'm grateful to you, dear, for I know you've done it all out of the goodness and kindness of your heart, but—but it's the first time Sophie's ever done anything—even quite little things—without telling me. It hurts a little—that's why I don't seem so glad as you expected."

"She said she'd explain all that when she came, and I'm sure the dear girl will settle everything satisfactorily. Don't imagine she's forgotten you or grown cold, Cynthia, for she has raved about you this whole month; in fact, if I weren't so fond of hearing about you I'd be sick of the sound of your name. I'm sure it isn't her fault if Geoff isn't prejudiced against you. Geoff—Geoffrey Raeburn—is the man's name, Cynthia."

"Is—he is a very good man, Edith?"

"Oh, I think so. Men seem to think him one of the best, while women simply worship him; but he's never looked

at a woman till Sophie came along. He's been the slave of some ideal creation of his brain, and I suppose your small sister bears a family resemblance."

"If he has ideals," Cynthia said, smiling for the first time, "he must be good, Edith."

Edith was greatly amused. This concern regarding goodness and this indifference to bags of money combined with a fascinating Colonial personality were so utterly unusual.

"I'm sure you'll like him, dear," she said quite solemnly; "at least, I hope you will, for Sophie wants you to let him come here so that they may be together as much as possible before he goes away. He promised his father to look after some place of his in Africa—I haven't the remotest idea in which part—and if he breaks his promise even for Sophie's sake it would be mean. So he thinks, at all events."

"Then," said Cynthia very hopefully, "he must have a sense of honor."

"You'll let him come?" Edith tried to speak quite patiently. To practical people a dreamer is ever a trial.

"Certainly. But of course," she added hastily, "he will put up at the inn. It wouldn't be quite correct for him to stay in this house."

"Of course not—even though its mistress has reached the mature age of twenty-two. Then I may tell Sophie every difficulty is cleared away, and they are sure of a welcome tomorrow afternoon when they arrive?"

"Yes, dear; and many, many thanks for coming this long distance to clear away difficulties."

"Oh, by the way, Sophie says you must try gently to rid the house of four young men, each of whom in turn evidently expressed some desire to marry her. I really can't think of the names, but probably you'll know the men I mean."

Cynthia laughed outright.

"I should think I do. Four terrible boys who, when they came here of an evening, used to reduce me to a nervous wreck. Fortunately they never arrived *en masse*: one or two, at most,

were enough for two girls to grapple with. They showed such strong tendencies to sit on the edge of a chair and breathe hard. I used to make Sophie howl after they went away, for until I pointed them out to her she didn't see their comical points."

"Oh, but Geoff isn't a bit like that," Edith assured her, rising. "You will see they're not lurking about during Geoff's stay. Now, dear, I must get my things on, for I ordered the fly for six."

"Surely you're not going back to-night. You'll—"

"I simply must, Cynthia," her visitor interposed. "Think of all my poor guests! Probably by this time my terrible husband has forgotten them, and is calmly pinning poor, unfortunate insects into his case. He's a frightful trial, Cynthia—I believe sometimes he wonders how I happen to be knocking about the house! Avoid the absent-minded, studious species, Cynthia, when you anticipate matrimony—and talking of the studious reminds me, I forgot to ask how that wonderful novel is progressing."

"It's now appearing in serial form," Cynthia answered with shy pride. "I was nearly mad with joy at first."

"No wonder, dear. I'm very glad, too." Edith was not enthusiastic. In her eyes Cynthia's devotion to her work, and that work, too, were her great and only defects. "Now, I *must* get on my hat, for I'm sure that's the fly coming up that long white road there."

"It is. That's the road that leads so suddenly and unexpectedly into this modest lane. You can't be home before midnight, Edith."

"Oh, the carriage'll be at the station. Thank goodness, the coachman is neither absent-minded nor intellectual."

When at last a little hand waving out of the window of the fly, now rattling along the white road, was all that was visible of Edith, Kirsty came into the hall.

"Whit wey did missie no cam hame?" she queried with all the free-

dom of one who has at one period held the person addressed in her arms.

It was then, as she turned to Kirsty to answer her question, that the sudden realization of what Edith's news meant to them swooped down upon Cynthia. It meant that after one short year they would stand in that little hall as they stood now, alone—alone for all the years to come; for though Sophie might visit them often, her home and more intense interests would be elsewhere. They had found one short month "a century" and "almost unbearable" without her; how were the years to be faced?

With a little desolate cry she flung herself into the old woman's arms and buried her face on her broad shoulder.

"Kirsty," she sobbed, "our bairn is engaged to be married."

II

NEXT afternoon at the same time Cynthia and Kirsty lingered at the cottage door to catch the first glimpse of the fly when it should come into sight on the white road. There was something pathetic about the happiness expressed in both faces; it was so sober and subdued, so utterly different from that which had shone out of every feature only about twenty-four hours before.

"There it is, Kirsty," Cynthia said, indicating a black speck far away in the distance. She spoke with the studied coolness of one who fears an emotional breakdown.

"I'd better awa tae the kitchen, then. A grand gentleman wi' a' that money'll no like tae see me here."

After which she went slowly across the hall toward the immaculate kitchen, and as she watched her go Cynthia's heart contracted. It was the first time in the course of all their goings or comings that the old woman had not been there to speed or welcome.

By this time the fly was again at the gate, and Cynthia was there, too. The gentle breeze ruffled her hair just as it had done yesterday; the sunshine

streamed upon her upturned face as it had done before, but even its searching rays found no delirious happiness there today, only quiet joy that seemed a trifle tremulous.

"Cynthia, my old Cynthia, at last!"

Sophie, laughing, plump little Sophie, was in her arms hugging and kissing her with all the vigor and fervor of yore, while a tall, dark and wonderfully attractive-looking man was standing by in patient amusement.

"Cynthia, this is Geoff," the girl cried when in time the spectator was remembered; "and Geoff, this is my old darling Cynthia I've told you about so often."

"I feel as if this introduction were quite unnecessary," Geoff laughed, as he clasped the elder sister's hand in his. "Through Sophie we are old friends, I assure you."

"Of course you are," Sophie responded calmly. "Now let's get into the house. Why," she cried, looking about her in amazement, "where's Kirsty? It's the first time I've come from anywhere and not seen the old darling in the hall—and after a whole month, too. I believe she's forgotten me, the wicked, heartless woman!"

So saying, she rushed into the kitchen, while Cynthia, with great decorum and dignity, conducted the man with bags of money and ideals to the drawing-room.

Certainly Edith had not overrated him. Before Sophie joined them Cynthia decided he was "very nice," and when he had departed to his inn for the night she deemed him charming.

"Isn't he perfect, Cynthia?" his fiancée cried, as she watched him slowly treading the long white road.

"He's traveled, well read and thirty, all of which being much more entertaining than perfection, my child," Cynthia returned lightly.

"Oh, I knew you'd rave about him, dear," exclaimed Sophie, giving her sister's arm a loving squeeze. "Everybody adores him."

"Well, he's more attractive than any former suitors I've been called upon to entertain." There was a twinkle in

Cynthia's eye. "I noticed he sat well back in his chair, didn't snifle nor giggle nor cough. Why, I believe I didn't detect even one single gasp!"

"Cynthia"—the younger girl's voice had a wounded sound—"don't speak like that, please. Don't make Geoff ridiculous, for if ever you make me laugh at Geoff my love will go and my heart will break. Ridicule kills love, Cynthia. Perhaps you don't know, but it does. I liked every one of those four boys immensely until you made me laugh at them, and after that they irritated me beyond endurance; in fact they became abominable to me—and I was often very, very sorry."

"And I am very, very sorry, dear," Cynthia said gently. "If I had known it hurt you I should never have even hinted at a funny point in them. However, I'm sure you're glad now, aren't you, for they are not to be compared with Geoff. You may rest assured that, though Geoff should prove screamingly funny to me in course of time, you will never know. After one evening's acquaintance, though, he strikes me as being one of the nicest men I have ever met. There, my own, are you satisfied?"

"Quite," returned Sophie with a long sigh.

"I must leave you now, dear, for I've neglected quite a lot of work yesterday and today. You'll come to me before you go to bed?"

"Of course. Meantime, I must go and unburden my soul to Kirsty."

For the first time in her life Cynthia's work bored her. The pen felt heavy in her hand, and the thoughts that usually crowded in upon her so quickly that it was a task to get them down on paper before they escaped her seemed disjointed, scattered and slow to come.

A strange unrest possessed her. Quite suddenly life in the little cottage and in the beautiful surrounding country had grown narrow and unsatisfying, and discontent brooded within her, discontent such as she had never known before.

"I must be run down or unnerved,"

she told herself by way of explanation. "Perhaps the strain and excitement of that serial, of Sophie's engagement, with all its little incidentals, are telling on me now. At any rate, I think I'll rest tonight."

Accordingly, she drew up a wicker chair to the open window, and with the warm night air softly fanning her she sat down to dream.

It was then, when all nature was hushed to rest, when scarcely a leaf stirred, that Cynthia's dream husband and dream children first came into her life. Hitherto, she had dreamt of career and fame; all other dreams she had deemed impossible for her, and tonight she wondered why she had fancied the gates of that particular paradise closed to her.

"It would be so sweet," she murmured, with a long, long sigh.

Though it was moonlight when Sophie came to the study she found Cynthia still by the window, her eyes closed and that wonderfully tender smile irradiating her whole face.

"Actually resting, Cynthia?"

She sank on the rug at the elder girl's feet and rested her head against her knees.

"I felt unusually tired and restless, Sophie, so I decided to loaf tonight and make up for lost time tomorrow. You see, with Geoff always here, I shall have a lot of time to work. It will be a graceful and convincing excuse for withdrawal of an evening."

"As if we'd let you withdraw! No, you mustn't be rude, my superior child, especially in your own house, to quote yourself; and since Geoff and I will be together all day we'll want you in the evening—if for nothing else but to act as a tonic and change. I suppose," she said in a different voice, rubbing her dimpled cheek against her sister's hand, "it's still hurting a little—because I didn't mention Geoff in my letters? Well, I've come tonight to tell you why I've been silent about it. Cynthia"—she rose suddenly to her knees and flung both arms round Cynthia's neck—"I wanted to tell you with my own

lips, with both arms round you like this—so that you'd know, though the other love had come, my love for you was just the very same."

"And I am appeased, little one," Cynthia answered after a moment of silence and dimness of vision.

"But when we heard Geoff must go abroad, Edith insisted on coming instead of me yesterday to break the news, and to ask you to let Geoff come here. It was so sweet of her to inconvenience herself for me that I gladly fell in with her plan, but when I heard you were cut up at my evident lack of confidence I wished I had left Geoff and come myself."

"But it's all quite right now, dearest, and everything promises to go as merrily as a marriage bell, as merrily as yours will go on a certain great eventful day. Affairs financially are all that can be desired; his people are evidently prepared to take you to their hearts when you give them the chance, as I have metaphorically done to Geoff. So, little one, the whole subject must be dismissed; like happy countries and people, you have no history."

"Cynthia," Sophie had sunk down on the floor again, and her young voice rang out quite tragically in the darkness, "there is a history! Geoff loves someone more than me; he only loves me because I resemble her in one way. He says she's dead—that she died the moment he met me. She's his ideal, Cynthia, and I'm so afraid he may meet her in the flesh some day and—and—" Sophie was unable to proceed. Cynthia's lips twitched with amusement, but her hand wandered sympathetically over the curly head at her knee.

"His ideal," the girl went on when she had conquered her emotion, "has brown hair like mine, and that's the only one point in which I resemble her, Cynthia. She is slender, tall, stately, while I, alas, am small, a—a trifle plump and a decided romp; and she has gray eyes. Oh, Cynthia, why hadn't I gray eyes when you have them? She is compassionate, loving, lovable, unselfish, serene and always—*always*, Cynthia—

patient, and good-tempered. "Cynthia"—the vocal tragedy became still more pronounced—"when he gets accustomed to the hair and finds out what a terror I really am he'll fall out of love with me. I am so sure of it, that if I weren't simply crazy about him I'd break it off."

"My dear, silly little sister, if such an atrocious creature as Geoff's ideal were in life at present he'd hate her as fiercely as every other man, woman and child would. Why, she's worse than the heroine of a Sunday school story. I am sure Geoff must have been bored to death with her always pottering about his brain, and that when he fell in love with you he buried her deep in a mental grave, and stamped down heavily upon her lest she might even stir."

"I did think she was a pig, myself," Sophie confessed, evidently relieved by her sister's opinion, "but I didn't like to tell him that. You see, if I am supposed to resemble her, even though only very occasionally in manner, I thought some of my plain speaking might rebound on myself. I am glad you don't like her, Cynthia. You're the most nearly perfect girl I know, but then I've often seen you waxy, and you say terrible things about people—which keeps you nice; whereas Geoff's woman was *never* nice."

"And Geoff's little fiancée often is—eh, Sophie?" was the teasing response. "Now, child, to bed. You must be worn out, and if I'm not mistaken, I heard some talk of an early morning ramble. Good night."

Cynthia kissed her with great tenderness, then began to bolt and bar the window for the night in her most practical manner. But when that was done and she was alone, the new light that had been born in her eyes that night came back, and the new smile illumined her face. Her dream world and its people had sprung into imaginary being again.

III

As day after day sped past Cynthia kept putting off that "making up for

lost time." The same spirit of unrest that had first taken possession of her on the night of Sophie's return home had her in its power still. She felt absolutely incapable of turning her attention to the affairs of a fictitious world, for life at the little cottage had become so full, so fascinating, that it seemed to occupy every hole and corner of her thoughts.

To give the lovers plenty of time to themselves, Cynthia feigned hard work, but the moment she closed the study door upon herself she became restless and miserable. Two weeks ago she would have rushed to her desk on entering her own particular den, and in a very few minutes would have lost herself in the sorrows and joys of the characters her brain had created; but that was over for her now. The hours in the study were long and dreary and full of wonder if the clock would ever strike six again. At six every evening she went to the drawing-room to act as a "tonic" and "change" for the lovers; at six the happiest hours of her life began.

After the modest, dainty little supper had been partaken amid much nonsense and gaiety, they would return to the drawing-room to begin the impromptu concert that was now the accepted mode of passing the evening. It was all this frivolity that was unsettling her, Cynthia told herself sternly, yet to have voluntarily missed any portion of it would have been absolutely impossible. All her life, even to the extreme old age to which she lived, Cynthia never forgot the rapture of those summer nights—never forgot how she used to sit by the open window watching the twilight deepen over the still, still country, listening with heart and brain wrapped in intense, exquisite pleasure to Geoff's glorious voice either alone or in unison with Sophie's.

There was one other, too, who found those evenings infinitely sweet, but his was not pleasure unalloyed. As he watched the quiet resting figure at the window he knew the meaning of this ecstasy of joy, knew by the pain at his heart, by the wild rebellion that welled

up within him every time his eyes lighted on her. He knew his blind folly had marred his whole life, and in his better moments he was devoutly glad that Cynthia had not been attracted to him, but those better moments were so few that it seemed to him that all his time was spent in passionately wishing she could read his heart and find at the same time a similar story written on her own.

Yet, in spite of this longing, the days went by as usual, and never one dawned in which her manner changed to him. She was always so invariably genial and cheerfully friendly that sometimes it would almost have pleased him if she had shown hatred or aversion. He would have deemed anything preferable to this gentle indifference.

Then the time of his departure drew very near, and with it the necessity of making final arrangements with the elder sister regarding the future of the younger. Consequently, one evening when Sophie had gone to the village on an errand for the minister, Geoff placed a chair close to Cynthia's at the window and braced himself for the effort.

He had meant to start right away, but the moment the gray eyes were lifted to his his good intention went the way of many others. He was unable to do anything but admire—admire what he loved with his whole soul, what was completely beyond his reach. Silently he noted how the hair fell softly on her brow, how fair, how sweet she was, and how utterly indispensable.

Oh, he couldn't live without her! Let honor and Sophie go to the wind or where they liked, for what did anything matter but the possession of her? To have her always, to be sure of her love, was ten thousand times more sensible than to quibble about honor and the fickle heart of an eighteen-year-old child and finally choose a life that would be worse than hell.

"Why so talkative, Geoff?"

The light, laughing question effectually stopped his mild thoughts. It was like cold water flung on fire, and it brought him immediately to his senses. He might as well be honorable; it was

useless to cause Sophie pain when Cynthia didn't care. So, in a dull, listless way, he had his say, and in time the conclusion came.

Cynthia heard a great deal about lands and money settlements, but to have told anyone how they were to be disposed of advantageously to Sophie would have been quite beyond her. Fortunately, there were a few level-headed lawyers to have fingers in the pie, for while Geoff, staring hard out of the window, had been talking, Cynthia was conscious of nothing but that a terrible awakening had come upon her with a suddenness that was appalling.

After he had finished the silence between them was of such long duration that Geoff turned quickly and looked at her. When she felt his eyes upon her, she sat bolt upright, and tried to say something sensible; but her lips quivered and no sound would come. She was terribly pale, and in a dazed fashion she tried to get out of her chair.

"Cynthia," he cried, starting toward her, "what's wrong?" The ring in his voice, the look on his face, betrayed him, and because they were powerless to do anything else the gray eyes met his. The secret of each heart was revealed, and for the moment all was forgotten but the ecstasy each felt in the presence of the other.

"Cynthia!"

Her name, uttered as she had never heard it uttered before, came to her through the twilight, echoing and re-echoing through her heart, first joyfully, wildly, then, as recollection burst upon her, dying away in a sob of despair.

"I must go away," she whispered. "Sophie is coming and I am very busy."

She knew his arms were stretched out hungrily toward her, that his face was white and convulsed with the agony of longing, but with an almost superhuman effort she steeled herself against him and turned away.

"Cynthia!"

Again her name was spoken in that

unknown tone, but this time only a dreary sob of despair sounded through her heart. Sophie was coming—singing happily—and the elder sister's bitter duty was very clear.

Geoff heard that singing, too; his arms fell heavily to his sides, and with a fierce sigh he turned to the window. In the wild, broken language of despair he was cursing himself for his madness, his folly, the absolute idiocy he had manifested at his age. How was he to bear the result of this madness? How could he endure the lifelong lie in which he seemed destined to take part? Oh, how was he to exist without Cynthia?

"Didst not hear me enter, mine own?"

Sophie's laughing voice was at his ear and Sophie's plump little hand was on his shoulder.

"I didst not," he answered in an effort to meet her mood; then, because the thing had to be faced out, he swung round to rally Cynthia on her deafness, but, save for Sophie and himself, the room was empty.

"You don't look well, Geoff," Sophie told him, with a little anxious pucker in her brow.

"I'm a bit tired—and not quite up to the mark, Sophie, so if you'll let me I think I'll hie me to my inn early to-night."

"You'll go now," was the firm response. "Good night, you poor sick boy."

She kissed him tenderly and touched his hair with a very caressing hand. In this compassionate mood she was very like Cynthia, he thought, and because of the resemblance he returned her kiss with equal tenderness.

Poor little Sophie! How hurt and wounded that trusting heart would have been had she known what a series of kisses and caresses were apparently bestowed on her but in reality on another whose likeness she bore!

That night, while Sophie slept, and Geoff, white and worn, was wrestling with fate and himself, Cynthia, by sheer force of will, was at her desk writing as she had never done before. Curi-

ously enough, she was engaged in the description of her heroine's agony as she parted forever with the man she loved, and for months after the book appeared the literary world marveled at the heart piercing accuracy and pathos of this particular passage.

"Work will kill my love," she whispered feebly when exhaustion had overcome her and her pen was laid aside. "It is the only thing to—"

Then she stopped suddenly. Who had once said that something else would kill love? Long ago—she had heard someone say that—why, it was Sophie on the night she and Geoff arrived.

"Ridicule kills love, Cynthia," every word came back to the elder girl with startling clearness. "Perhaps you don't know it, but it does."

She would give it a trial, at all events, for, no matter at what cost, her love must die. The more she thought of it the more convinced she became that ridicule, cutting and cruel, was the most deadly weapon she could use.

Accordingly, she set about discovering every little absurdity Geoff might possess, and as she hit on each in turn she compelled herself to be amused.

But her laughter did not ring true, and more than once it ended in a moan of pain; for was not her beautiful dream world passing into space? See, how they faded out, first her husband, then her little dream children! It seemed to her they turned often to look at her as they went, turned with wonder and sorrow in their eyes, but she hid her face in her hands so that she might not see them and let them go.

Later on, when some days had passed, she dealt Love his first stunning blow, for as she recalled the short scene through which she had lived as heroine she smiled in genuine amusement.

Geoff had looked funny, and she had tried to be so heroic, so dramatic! She remembered how valiantly she had wrestled with an almost ungovernable inclination to sneeze because she felt it might have sent their little tragedy bounding over the frail barrier at the other side of which lurks comedy.

IV

AFTER that eventful night Geoff rarely saw Cynthia. Sophie told him she was fearfully busy. She told him this anxiously, for it seemed to her the elder girl was working too hard.

"Don't you notice how worn out she is at supper, Geoff?" she said.

"I do," he answered briefly, looking far away into the blue distance over Sophie's curly head.

"If she would only join us at night," she went on, "it would be a change, at all events. 'Don't you think you could persuade her, Geoff? I can't.'"

"Shall I try at supper tonight?"

"No. Beard her in her den. Perhaps if you talk to her seriously alone it will be more effective. You see, she'll think I've nothing to do with it then. You could remind her," Sophie's dimpled mouth quivered, "that it's your last week."

At the beginning of Sophie's speech Geoff's heart leaped within him, but when the bright face clouded and the pretty young voice broke he was filled with shame. Poor trusting little girl, sorrowing because he had taught her to love him—taught her to love him because he had been fascinated by some taking little tricks of manner, her plump, dimpled beauty, and her unspoiled youth! Yet, to see Cynthia alone for five short minutes! What rapture, but what torment, too! He had yearned, how passionately only he himself would ever know, for the opportunity; but Sophie's twitching mouth—her broken voice—

"Sophie," he said at last, "I think I had better not. She might think it cool of me to interfere."

"Coward!" teased Sophie, brightening again. "Come, I will lead you to the door, and call for you again in half an hour. If she becomes very alarming, a tug of the bell rope will bring me at once."

So saying she inserted her finger in his buttonhole and playfully dragged him out of the garden into the house and right upstairs.

"Now for it!" she cried, opening the

door of the study and pushing him in. "Cynthia, Geoff wants to see you very particularly."

Her laugh had long died into silence, as had also the clatter of her wooden heels on the stone hall below, before Cynthia turned round to confront Geoff.

"Well?"

There was something like a challenge in her voice. But for the pallor of her face and the blue circles about her tired eyes it would have angered him. He knew so well the dark suspicion in her brain.

"I have come to ask you to rest, Cynthia—in the evening, if you will not through the day," he said, forcing that lack of sympathy or anxiety generally attributed to brothers, so that she might dismiss the suspicion her attitude and voice bespoke. "Sophie and I miss you at our concerts; his mode of address reminded him suddenly and forcibly of the days he used to stand before his teacher, hands behind his back, to state dry historical or geographic facts. 'You formed such an appreciative, such an uncritical audience. Will you not join us this week? It—it's my last.'"

His voice faltered in spite of himself, and something of his self-control gave way.

"It's kind of you to worry—kind of you both," she answered, "but I'm simply writing against time. However, I'll come down one night."

"Only one?"

Unconsciously he had drawn nearer.

She looked up at him with eyes full of appeal; but for him the appeal was lost in the weariness, the whiteness, the sorrow of the face he loved. With a cry that was more like a sob than anything else he fell on his knees beside her chair and drew her into his arms, holding her close as if to shield her from any further care.

"Cynthia," he moaned, "it's breaking my heart to see you work—and suffer like this."

"You are stronger," she whispered, resting quietly in his arms, for she was too weak for immediate resistance;

"you ought to help me to bear—instead of making it so hard. My work lessens my suffering, Geoff, but this—this will only increase it."

As she concluded she freed herself, and because of the depth and the strength of his love he did not prevent her. To add to her sorrow was the last thing he would permit himself to do.

"Unless Sophie changes her mind, Geoff," Cynthia continued in a crushed, broken way, "you are her affianced husband to me, and I—I am only her sister to you."

He retreated a few steps. "Unless Sophie changes her mind"—they must be nothing to one another! Without the least conceit, Geoff felt Cynthia might just as well have said, they must be nothing to one another forever.

Well, she was right; there were truth and justice in her words. Sophie had the prior claim—poor little Sophie, whose mouth had quivered because he must leave her soon, and whose voice had faltered at the thought!

"Then," he said, and he, too, seemed broken in spirit by the decree of fate, "we may expect you one night?"

"Yes, one night."

He moved toward the door, then paused, then turned round as though unable to go. She was watching him with still, set face.

"I'm sorry, Cynthia," he said. "I can get along all right—I deserve it all for forcing Sophie to love me—for being such a fool at my age, but I'd give anything if—if you weren't suffering too."

"I can bear it better than you think," she answered dully; "my life's been happy and uneventful until now—so—so I've nothing much to grumble about."

"Then my hand is the first to hold the cup of sorrow to your lips—"

"Geoff"—she uttered his name like a cry of agony and rose to her feet with hands outstretched, as if to protect herself from danger—"you must go back to Sophie now. Oh, for God's sake, go! Tell her I can't join you even for one night's music. It—it would kill me!"

At that moment they heard the light clatter of Sophie's wooden heels as she came back at the end of the half-hour, and by the sound they knew she was near. Silently, appealingly, Cynthia motioned him to join the girl, and after one long look he obeyed.

When the door had closed upon him Cynthia felt as though the gates of Heaven had clashed against her soul. The last vestige of her fast ebbing courage and composure forsook her, and before she could regain her chair or even grasp her desk for support, a terrible blackness came upon her and she felt herself sinking down to a sickening depth, away from the sunshine, from everything, until at last all was forgotten in merciful unconsciousness.

The last week sped swiftly past, and during this time Geoff strove valiantly to be to Sophie all that she had a right to expect, strove to forget the sweet face he had blanched and the gray eyes he had dimmed and made so weary.

Then the last night came and passed like a frightful dream. It was so terrible to have to feign the solicitous lover to Sophie while thought was in the room above with the woman he loved. Surely she would join them; but as time went on it became evident she intended to remain upstairs.

"You must excuse Cynthia, Geoff, dearest," Sophie said shortly before he left. "She doesn't mean to be rude. I really think she is ill, and if she doesn't change soon I'm going to get the doctor in spite of her. No work, no matter how important, would have made her treat anybody as she has treated you. I was angry at first, but now I know the poor darling is ill."

"Never mind, little one," he answered. "I understand."

There was just one short hour, and then he had to go. How much it pained him to see her weep and to feel her cling convulsively, Sophie would never know. She only knew he was tenderness embodied, and when his lips twitched and his voice for a man grew pathetically tremulous she thought it was because of her.

"You must come up and say good-bye to Cynthia," she whispered sobbingly.

But there was no need to go up, for Cynthia was coming down, and to his dying day Geoff carried stamped indelibly on his brain the picture of her as she descended the stairs that night, her delicate hand on the balustrade and her set face whiter than her dress.

No words passed between them, for there was still consideration for Sophie to be remembered. So, with a brotherly kiss on his part, a sisterly kiss on hers, they passed from quivering, pulsating life into existence. Their hands fell apart, Cynthia gathered the weeping Sophie to her breast and Geoff stepped over the threshold.

Sophie never lifted her face again, but Cynthia, with one tender hand on the curly head at her breast, watched him till he was out of the lane.

A little later he came into sight once more on the long white road, a tiny figure turning many times and waving often.

Quite suddenly the small, agitated speck touched Cynthia as being funny; like the little weather man she used to hate in her childhood because he never came out but to declare rain.

After all, the whole thing had its decidedly funny side, and of the three acting in this life drama Geoff was the funniest. It was the first time the ridiculous side had appealed to her involuntarily, and under the stinging blow love cowered very low and trembled.

V

AFTER Sophie passed the wild weeping and sobbing period life in the little cottage fell into the old lines of placid monotony.

Geoff's letters were events that marked time, and only a very keen observer would have noticed how the coming and passing of each left Cynthia a little changed. Only the keen observer could have detected under the discreet exterior of sisterly interest the wistful wonder in her eyes as mail day

succeeded mail day without bringing a letter for her.

Oh, he might have let her have just one short note of her very own from him, one that she might cherish all her life and perhaps hold in her hand in the hour of death. But, by and by she saw the wisdom of his silence, and sometimes when the pain at her heart was less acute she was glad. After all, it would help her in her self-appointed task; it would be easier to continue the war against love when there was nothing to remind her of him. She knew that one word of his address to herself would make every little victory gained a hollow mockery; it would make her a slave to the love of him again, and because she deemed this love treachery to Sophie, she tried to be glad that her hunger for that one word was unsatisfied.

So the war in that loyal heart was resumed. For days and weeks and months it raged fiercely, and if at times it wore her out, Sophie and Kirsty and all who knew her blamed her work. She rested then to please them, and tried to affect her old cheerful manner until they consented to her wielding the pen again.

In this manner two years passed, and in that marvelously short space of time Cynthia had rapidly climbed the literary ladder and stood on the topmost rung. She was a famous woman with the world literary and social at her feet.

Before, when her stories had been simple little things, she had been scarcely recognized, but now that her work had completely changed she was a power of the age. Because of the brilliant satires, that had cost her more than anybody would ever know, the world raved about her, and the usual important people tried to lionize her. Whole columns in monthly and weekly periodicals were devoted to her life's history and its many amusing incidents, all of which she found exceedingly diverting, being such new reading for her. Then, when in the hope of forgetting still more effectively she allowed herself to be fêted by the great ones of the earth, the ladies' papers expatiated at

some length on her "sweet, pale face which, but for the humorous twinkle in her eyes, would be intensely sad." In time it became smart to look like this, but as a twinkle and an intensely sad expression proved a somewhat difficult combination to cultivate, the fashion soon died out.

But she was not popular; her genius for ridicule, though delightfully entertaining and fresh in book form, proved a trifle embarrassing at close quarters. She had the unfortunate and unconscious knack of turning by a glance or word the tenderest pathos to bathos and the most impressive relation of some solemn event to a side splitting joke. Consequently the bulk of those who came in contact with her avoided her as much as common politeness would permit.

In the old days this would have been a real sorrow to her; but, though Time in passing left no wrinkled or silvered hair by way of impress, he had seen her mouth reset in hard, satirical little lines, the serene tenderness of her eyes displaced by the gleam that made people afraid to talk to her, and had, lastly, seen the poor young heart in which the war between the two powers had raged gradually turning to stone. He had been gentle with her in passing, but her conquest had been hard, and in consequence her lack of popularity troubled her not at all.

It was when she reached this stage in her murderous war with love that a wild, incoherent letter from Sophie sent her rushing with all possible speed to the little cottage. She wasted so little time that the end of a few hours saw her at the garden gate with a very agitated Sophie clasped in her arms and an equally agitated nurse in the background.

"Don't blame me, Cynthia," Sophie was sobbing, without any preliminary by way of greeting. "I've fought and struggled to be—to be true, but I can't—I can't. Geoff must have known all about a month ago, but—but he's never answered my letter. Oh, I—I hope it won't kill him—I'm so miserable, Cynthia!"

"Ay, she is that—it's been worryin' us tae death for weeks," supplemented Kirsty, shaking her head and applying the hem of her apron to her eyes. "She hasna slept or eaten for days, sae—sae dinna be hard on the bairn."

"You poor little soul!" cried Cynthia, holding her out at arm's length to see what havoc had been wrought in her. "Why, you're almost thin, and if it weren't for your poor, tortured eyes you'd be absolutely colorless. Of course, I won't be hard on her, Kirsty. I'm not an ogress yet, though I write like one. Now take me into the house, do, and after I've had some tea and a coherent account of this drama in real life, I'll give you my opinion. Somehow, I don't think it'll kill Geoff, Sophie; in fact, I feel so convinced about it that I feel certain you can take a substantial tea without appearing the least heartless or brutal."

As she spoke she herself led the way into the house, and Sophie and Kirsty followed in almost sheepish silence. The cool, laughing way in which she had dismissed what had been worrying them for weeks not only took their breath away, but forced on them the unpleasant conviction that their tears and sorrow had, on the whole, been unnecessary and ludicrous.

So, during tea—which Cynthia had insisted on Kirsty's sharing with them—they gave quite a lucid account of a very old and hackneyed occurrence, the fancy of the child being routed by the love of a woman, and when tea was over Cynthia had mastered every detail. For the present, thanks to the complete mastery she had over self, she was keeping her thoughts from straying to what this change of affairs would mean to her.

"And if you consent," concluded Sophie, a tender radiance stealing over her face, "we'll—we'll be married in a month."

"This man is wise, I see," laughed Cynthia. "He's going to risk no delay, eh, Sophie? Well, little one, since he seems quite as nice as Geoff in every way, especially financially, which, of course, is the main thing, I see no

reason to withhold my consent. Of course I'll remain here until everything is over, and then I can return to my work with a mind at rest."

This time there were no questions regarding his goodness or honor. Truly, the Cynthia of today was a much smarter person than the Cynthia of two years ago.

"He's coming to spend a week at the inn," said Sophie, smiling gaily; "just by way of approbation you know."

"It won't be such a worry this time, Kirsty: our staff is so much larger."

Cynthia laughed at her own remark and the old woman echoed it heartily. The way the girl had treated the affair was as great a relief to Kirsty as a surprise.

"Yes, thanks to all the money you earn with those horrid books, Cynthia." Her sister was in the old loving, kneeling position beside her. "Why do you write such hatefully sarcastic, bitter books? Why, you laugh at everything now; you even laughed at me today."

"Because it's better, silly child. It's braver—and more comfortable for other people, too. Weeping and sighing and wailing are such embarrassing, such boring performances."

"Still, it's not always better to laugh. Oh, Cynthia," the girl cried eagerly, her own important affairs recurring to her, "don't you think if Geoff had really cared he wouldn't have stayed away so long?" All that talk of unexpected things turning up to be done always roused my suspicions—especially after I began to care for Hugh; and now, I *hope*—no, I'm *sure*—he doesn't care—"

"And so let the matter rest, dear." Cynthia was feeling suddenly very weary. "No hearts break nowadays for love; it's only the loss of money or position that casts one down. And now, if you'll let me, I think I'd like to have a peep at my study. Whenever I thought of it in London I used to grow quite sick with longing—so please leave me alone with it until supper time."

"Miss Cynthia," said Kirsty, stepping boldly up to her, "though the

bairn gets mairrit you'll keep on the cottage?"

"My dear Kirsty, it would blight my life to sell the cottage. Of course I'll keep it on—and you, too, as head bottle washer, if you want to stay."

There was a tender light in her eyes as she looked into the rosy face of the old woman. It was so good to come across one soul too faithful to desert.

"Oh, that's a'right," Kirsty answered with a long sigh. "It would have blighted my life, too, if the cottage had been sold. Besides, the air'll dae Miss Sophie's bairns guid."

"Well, I'll leave you two to arrange the furnishing of the nursery," laughed Cynthia, managing to make her departure at last.

As she closed the tiny dining room door after her the village postman came up the garden path. Usually the evening delivery was quite bulky, but tonight there was only one letter, and it was for Cynthia herself.

"Glad to see ye back, miss," the postman said with a broad grin. "Lunnon's no guid for onybody in this hot weather."

After which he swung hastily down the short gravel path, then onto the road, and when his footsteps were rousing a hundred echoes in the silence of the summer's night she looked almost fearfully at the envelope. No other would have sent a letter to the cottage, and for that reason she knew who the sender was before the familiar writing met her eyes. This was what she had longed for so often in vain—what she had wanted to hold in her hand as she drifted out of life—and it had come too late.

In a dazed, bewildered way she reached her study, and sank into the old familiar wicker chair by the window. For a long time the letter lay on her lap, while she gazed far away over the beautiful country stretching out before her and saw nothing but the tragedy of her own life.

Geoff was free. She was free, too, free to read whatever he cared to write, but there was little use in taking advantage of that liberty when it had,

like the letter, come too late. Still, the letter would have to be answered, so with shaking fingers she ripped the envelope open and pulled out the contents.

She had not gone far before a low laugh of genuine amusement tinkled through the room, and at the sound of it a dumb, unspeakable horror laid its chill grasp on her soul. That laugh had been her own! She had been amused; she had laughed aloud at Geoff's letter because it was full of tender love, because now Geoff, to the heartless Cynthia of today, was nothing but a ridiculous memory.

It should have been a day of rejoicing, for ridicule had come out with flying colors and warm young love lay dead. She had brought this about by nights of sleeplessness and pain, by days of hard work and discipline, and now in her hour of victory she sat with her face buried in her hands in an agony of mind.

Presently she looked up, and without perusing her letter to the end tore it into shreds and flung it out of the window.

"For fear I might laugh again," she said tremulously; "because poor little Cynthia of the long ago loved the writer so much."

Poor little Cynthia of the long ago! How bravely she had fought to be loyal and true to what she deemed right; and what a lot of unnecessary anguish she had suffered! How she had wept when her dream world had faded out of sight, when she had had to shut her eyes to the outstretched, pleading hands of her little dream children, lest she should find it impossible to let them go! Why, Cynthia of long ago was dead—she must have drooped with every victory gained by ridicule, until, when love fell for the last time, little Cynthia of the long ago passed unheeded out of existence, and the Cynthia of today drew her first breath.

That night, long after the little household was asleep, Cynthia wrote her letter to Geoff. It cost her a lot of hard thinking and tearing up, but in time it was finished and sealed, and Cynthia, white and spent, held it against her breast.

What she had suffered Geoff would never know. Like all the world, he would come in time to shun her for her heartlessness, her power of ridicule: he would judge her without a hearing, without even troubling to speculate as to what had made her the woman she now was, and in time he would not only console himself with somebody else, but be glad he had missed her.

Here a hard little smile parted her lips and the gleam that frightened people came back to her eyes. After all, despite its underlying tragedy, this little episode had its decidedly ridiculous side, and, but that good taste forbade it, it might have made a thoroughly amusing tale. It was so unusual for the object of her secret and dishonorable passion to become too ridiculous to marry when a lucky turn in circumstances made such a proceeding quite honorably possible.

She laid the letter on the desk and without rising turned out the lamp. The blinds were still undrawn, so the moment the artificial gleam died the room was flooded with moonlight, and instinctively she turned to admire.

"A truly fitting and dramatic finale," she murmured. "Rays of moonlight, dark room, sealed letter, heroine alone! Hero not being picturesque in modern attire, and now really very ridiculous in the sight of the interesting heroine, doesn't matter."

She affected a laugh, but in spite of herself a quiver crept into her voice, and for the first time since her little predecessor had died and she had come into life, the Cynthia of today burst into an agony of tears.



TRUTH is stranger than fiction—to many.

THAT MISERABLE JOSEPH

By CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT

WITH a dying gasp the automobile stopped in front of the door of a lonely house on a lonely road in a lonely country. The very handsome and vivacious young woman who had been driving uttered an exclamation not entirely in keeping with her pretty face, gazed around despairingly and finally hopped out of the car as nimbly as her tight-fitting skirt would permit and approached the door.

"Rat-a-tat-tat-tat! Rat-a-tat-tat!" she knocked; and again: "Rat-a-tat-tat!"

Desisting at last, she tried the door, only to find it fast. She looked at the windows, but they were too high for princess-clad femininity to hope to enter by them. Finally, tired out, she swept her skirts aside and sat down on the step, resting her elbows on her knees and her chin on her hands. "Gee!" she murmured. "Gee! And only yesterday I was longin' for the simple life! Gee!"

For a while she sat silent, then burst out again. "Lonelyville-on-the-Hudson. Ten miles to Anywhere. Gee!"

The patter of a raindrop on the step aroused her. "Help!" she cried theatrically. "Help! Help! I'll give ten dollars to any man who helps me! Help! Help!"

She waited, but no one came and the rain began to splatter relentlessly on her expansive beplumed hat. "Last chance!" she cried. "I'll—I'll *love* any man who rescues me."

Still no one appeared, and at last she grew angry. "If the jay that owns this shebang turns up now after my clothes are ruined I'll—I'll make him

suffer or my name isn't Fluffy Fruffles!" she declared viciously through her small white teeth.

Pat to the moment a step crunched on the gravel, and a man came running around the corner of the house plainly making for shelter. When he saw the girl he stopped.

He was a remarkable if not a striking person. Tall, stoop-shouldered, with long hair and watery blue eyes that peered from behind huge convex spectacles, in age anywhere from twenty-five to fifty, he looked anything rather than a squire of damsels in distress.

Any port in a storm, however. Metaphorically speaking, Miss Fruffles flung herself upon him.

"Discovered!" she cried, forgetting her rage and striking an attitude. "Hail, first aid to the drowned! Hail! Say, Johnny, you're welcome as an angel! Open the door quick, and let's get from under the Apollinaris shower."

The man hesitated, staring amazedly at the girl. He had in his hand a key, obviously a house key, but he made no effort to use it.

"On your way, Willie!" cried Miss Fruffles impatiently. "On your way! Get busy!"

The man found his tongue at last. "Do you want to get in?" he asked stupidly.

"Do I want to get in? Do I want to get in? Now, what do you suppose I'm standin' here for—to admire the scenery?"

The rain was pattering in big drops around the pair, and the man reluctantly inserted the key in the lock and slowly turned it. The moment the door

was opened the girl brushed by him into the house.

"Thank you," she panted with dangerous humility. "Since you're so pressing, I'll accept your kind invitation and take a seat."

The young-old man did not answer. He took off his hat and hung it carefully upon a hook in the wall, then bent on the girl a look of perplexity not unmingled with consternation.

Miss Fruffles, who had bestowed herself comfortably before a fire that smoldered on the hearth, returned the look with composure. "Well?" she said lazily. "What is it, Willie? Let's have it."

"Well—er—you know, I'm afraid it's set in for an all-night rain," hesitated the man. "There doesn't seem to be any chance of its holding up. And it's getting dark." He consulted his watch. "It's only a mile to the village," he proceeded hopefully. "If you start now you'll get there before the roads get very muddy. I'll lend you an umbrella and—"

Galvanized by astonishment, the girl sat up. "Me!" she shrilled. "Me! Me go out in that rain! Not on your tintype."

"But—but you can't go later. It will be too dark."

"Well—in that case, I'll just have to stay here."

The man started in horror. "You—you can't mean that you're thinking of staying here all night!" he protested limply.

The girl gasped. "Will you listen to that?" she exclaimed, apostrophizing the ceiling. "You don't suppose I want to stay here, do you, Willie? But where else would you suggest that I should stay?"

The man raised his hands despairingly. "But you can't stay," he protested. "Suppose somebody should come in! What—what would they say? I—I can't permit it."

"Well, now, that's right nice of you, Willie!" The girl had suddenly softened. "But don't you worry. My reputation ain't going to suffer. None of my friends'll believe anything wrong about me—especially after they see

you," she added aside. "I can stand it if you can," she finished aloud.

"But—but I wasn't thinking of you! I am professor of *belles lettres* at Miss Rixton's Select Academy, and I'll lose my place if you do. Miss Rixton is very strict."

"Well, you—you— Say, mister, what is your name, anyway?"

"Joseph—"

"I knew it! I knew it! If ever there was anybody that looked the part of that miserable wretch— Look here, Joseph, if you're so afraid of that reputation of yours, you can just walk that mile yourself."

"But I would get drenched!"

"Really! Well! If you ain't the limit!" Words failed Miss Fruffles, and she dropped back in her chair and gazed at her unwilling host in incredulous amazement.

In the pause a thunderous hammering at the door sounded above the roar of the rain, and with a wild cry the girl flung herself on her knees and clasped the man around the legs.

"Oh, save me!" she wailed. "Save me! They've been following me! I outran them, but they've caught up with me. Save me! Oh, save me! Had you a mother? If so, by her memory, I adjure you to save me!"

The storm lulled suddenly, and in the momentary hush a voice made itself heard. "Open the door or I'll break it down," it thundered. "I know she's there and I will have her."

"You hear! You hear!" shrieked the woman. "Oh, protect me! Protect me!"

"Get up, please. I'll protect you." The man's face was blanched and his fingers shook, but he evidently meant what he said. "Let me go, please. This isn't—er—decent."

Miss Fruffles cowered back on the sofa behind her and buried her face in her hands, apparently overcome by terror. A close observer, however, might have noticed that she could see perfectly well between her fingers.

With nervous steps the professor hurried across the room and snatched from the wall a well-used fencing foil.

He smashed off the button and had in his hand a jagged and dangerous weapon.

As he turned toward the door it burst open and two men tumbled in.

The professor faced them. "Stop!" he commanded. "If you take another step I'll kill you."

The biggest man glared at him. "Why, you little toad," he exclaimed, "I'll wring your infernal—"

"Stop!" The other man caught his companion by the arm and dragged him backward. "Stop! That thing's dangerous. Besides, I'll bet it's some trick of that little devil— By George! I thought so!" He paused as his eyes fell on Miss Fruffles's shaking shoulders. "Here, Fluffy," he went on, raising his voice, "your turn's over and you'll get the hook if you don't come off. We've got just an hour before the curtain goes up. A joke's a joke, and you've put it all over us, but—"

"All right, Billy, I'm coming." Miss Fruffles was on her feet, without a sign of discomposure on her mobile face. "I'll be glad to go! This—er—gentle-

man was just suggesting that I tramp off in the rain to save his spotless life from the breath of scandal."

"What!" The big man turned threateningly upon the paralyzed professor, who stood with dropped sword and gaping mouth. "I'll smash him one—"

"No, you won't. You shan't hurt him. He's a miserable Joseph, of course, but he was plucky enough at the last, and I won't have him harmed. Besides, I owe him something." She turned and approached her bewildered host.

"Good-bye, Joseph," she said. "Try to live down your name. Come and see me and I'll help you. I'll begin now by giving you something you never had before in all your life." With a sudden motion she flung her arms around the paralyzed professor and kissed him squarely on the lips. Then, in an instant, she was gone, leaving in his hand a scrap of paper which read:

BLANK STREET THEATER
FLUFFY FRUFFLES'S FAIRY FANTASIES.
ADMIT ONE.



MELANCHOLY

By ANDREW HALE

O PURPLE-CLAD, and Passion's Greater Part,
Bewildering in thy witching mystery,

How I have always loathed and dreaded thee!
Yet all my life thy power has ruled my heart;
Mixed with the keenest joys there is thy smart,
Inevitable End of Ecstasy.

Yet from thee nothing true was ever free;
The only constant thing in love thou art.

For now I know thee better, wondrous one,
Thy purple is worth worlds on worlds of gilt.
I know the things for great men thou hast done;
I know thou art the motif of the lilt,
The minor cloud that makes the major sun,
The base on which love's symphony is built.

THE EXPERIMENTAL JOURNEY

By W. H. G. WYNDHAM MARTYN

PETER MUIR walked to the hotel in Victoria Street, where he was in the habit of lunching, in a particularly happy frame of mind. There were two reasons for this, the chief being that he was to have as his guest the Lady Cynthia Michaelstowe. Her husband was member for the rural division in which Peter Muir had perpetrated that architectural abomination, all gold, gables and pink bricks, known as Muir Hall. Social advancement lay in the good graces of the Michaelstowes, and although Muir was aware that Lady Cynthia had done him the honor to lunch with him for the purpose of getting a large subscription to her pet charity, he was able and willing to pay the price.

The other reason which increased his joy in living was the fact that he had accomplished the unwelcome task of telling his manager—an old schoolfellow—that he must relinquish his position to a younger man, who was even now on his way from Chicago filled with the most approved and modern business methods. Muir admitted to himself that old Barwell had been a faithful worker; and in consideration thereof he would not be dismissed, but would continue as the new man's assistant at a reduced rate. The news had spelled dire trouble to Barwell, whose invalid wife and large family of girls had prevented him from saving to any extent. It was left to him to figure how five pounds a week might accomplish what his former eight pounds had barely managed to do.

Lady Cynthia was alighting from her victoria as Muir came to the hotel, and beamed upon him graciously. After

asking as to his wife's health she turned, without listening for an answer, to a smart-looking electric runabout which was standing in the street by the hotel entrance. "Do you know," she said, "I am very much interested in these electric cars. We have all sorts of the other kind, but none of these. I don't think Colonel Michaelstowe understands them."

Muir had no liking for motor cars. He was wont to say that for the English county gentleman, the landed proprietor, so to say (he owned Muir Hall, its two lodges and the ten acres that lay about it), the horse was good enough. But he was far from obtruding his prejudices upon a duke's daughter. Indeed, he remembered that the Colonel was celebrated as an owner of fast cars and had tried even for international honors. "I highly approve of electric cars," he said. He peered at the monogram adorning the panel of the one under discussion. "This, if I mistake not, is owned by my friend Philander Smith, of"—he was about to say Tooting, but felt it would be wiser to give Philander a flavor of the landed gentry—"Philander Smith, of Surrey. Mrs. Philander Smith," he added, "is the third cousin of a Portuguese viscount."

Lady Cynthia evinced no sort of interest in the peerage of Portugal; she was still intent on the electric motor.

"I suppose you don't understand these things, do you?" she demanded.

Now most of the mistakes Muir had made in his life were due to a rooted dislike to confess ignorance of any subject. He plunged in boldly. "I understand the principle of the thing," he

said profoundly. "It is driven by electric fluid."

"That much one understood, naturally," she replied with a touch of impatience. "But I want to know what electricity is. No one seems to be able to tell me."

Muir, unaware that Edison himself returns no answer to such a question, made a pretense of answering.

"There are two theories," he asserted, "the positive and the negative. I personally incline to the former."

"Then, why is it," persisted Her Ladyship, "that our cars all have to be started with a crank in front, while this seems to have none? I am so afraid of those horrid handles," she added. "My husband has had so many accidents from cranking."

"This is a distinct improvement," said Muir genially.

"Our cars are steered by a wheel, but this seems to have a bar. Why?"

"There are some," answered Muir firmly, "who prefer wheels, and others who prefer bars. My friend Smith prefers bars."

"How does one start it, Mr. Muir? I'm so stupid about machinery."

"Very simply," returned Muir with the pride of his little knowledge. "You just press a knob and it starts; you press another and it stops."

"I must certainly buy one," she said. "I believe there's a place in Baker Street where they train one's coachman to become an expert chauffeur for three guineas. I must send Pond to them." She looked for a second at Muir and then glanced to the narrow space between the steering lever and the seat.

"Unfortunately, Pond has grown rather stout. I doubt if he could sit in there. It's so narrow. Why, you could hardly—"

Muir burned with the zeal to demonstrate that, although not possessed of the agility of youth, he was far from stout. "I assure you," he said with firmness, "that I could do it easily. Allow me to show you."

Some evil destiny tempted the unhappy man and he squeezed into the seat triumphantly. If Smith were to

come along, as he wished he might, he would explain that he was demonstrating for the benefit of the Lady Cynthia Michaelstowe, daughter of the Duke of Essex, and a near neighbor of his own.

"There's more room than I thought," said the other. "I shall send Pond to Baker Street tomorrow. Show me which knob starts it."

"This one," he answered at haphazard, placing a well-shod foot with what he felt was a dainty gesture on the nearest pedal. "When I press this," he asserted, "I start." He smiled pleasantly and the smile was his undoing, for inadvertently he leaned more weight than he noticed on the pedal and a moment later the car set out in a southerly direction.

Lady Cynthia gazed with interest; she was anxious to see in how narrow a space he would be able to turn. It would be so useful, she thought, in shopping, and Bond Street was so narrow.

Muir did not even turn round to look at her, but disappeared into the maze of traffic. She waited for ten minutes, and then, realizing that she had lost her luncheon as well as her subscription, drove home in a very bad temper.

Exactly how Mr. Muir felt as he went steadily down Victoria Street can never be comprehended by anyone but the victim, and his vocabulary is insufficient to voice such woe. Outside the stores, a gust of wind bereft him of his glossy hat, and it was instantly trampled upon by an elderly and misanthropic horse who cherished an undying hatred toward any form of the motor vehicles that were driving his race from the streets. The car Muir had annexed was the work of an ingenious mechanic, who had embodied in it many unusual features, some of which would have baffled an accomplished chauffeur. The number of handles, knobs and levers appalled Muir; but the knowledge that Lady Cynthia was even now awaiting his return spurred him to action. "Something must be done," he muttered, and trod on a pedal.

The sudden application of the brake—for this was the function of the pedal

upon which Muir leaned his weight—not only nearly threw him from his perch; but caused the machine to skid upon the glassy street until it brought up by a Camden Hill bus. The fluent driver, naturally a man of uncertain temper, had been twice reprimanded within the week by his company, and beheld in the badly scratched side of his vehicle a possible dismissal unless he could saddle Muir with the blame justly his.

Whipping up his horses, he started in pursuit, his bold and graphic descriptions of Muir's personality, ancestors and skill as a driver punctuated with cracks of his whip. Muir heard clattering hoofs, and turning his head, beheld the yellow engine of destruction bearing down upon him at a gallop, while his own machine, incapable under his guidance of additional speed, seemed an easy victim. But fate was kind—or reserved him for worse things—and the driver's vengeance was frustrated by a policeman, who haled him to a nearby station on a charge of furious driving and endangering the lives of his fellows.

The corner opposite St. Margaret's was negotiated on two wheels; and the momentary joy in finding the car so easy to steer was lost in the reflection that at the first block in the traffic he must inevitably come to utter ruin. In his fancy he saw himself charging down on carriages, policemen, elderly women and even tender infants. He decided to proceed up Whitehall, where the road was wide, rather than turn over Westminster Bridge. But fate, in the form of a coster with his fruit-laden barrow, was against such an itinerary. The coster, a leader in local Socialism, felt he had as much right to the road as Muir, and deliberately pushed his barrow before the motor. This, thought the Socialistic coster, will show him! The impact of the collision so deflected the car that it turned gaily to the south and was passing the gates of the House before Muir could recover his balance. When he scrambled back on the seat, an elderly member of the upper chamber was crossing the road before him.

He was an ex-minister of national fame, and used to having respect shown him. He looked up at the coming car and waved a stern hand. This was a gesture bitterly resented by Muir. As well, he thought, try to stay a charging herd of cattle with a walking stick!

How the ex-minister avoided instant annihilation one can hardly conjecture. In relating the incident later, he was accustomed to attributing it, somewhat remotely perhaps, to the fact that when at Oxford half a century earlier he had rowed number four in the boat. While executing his memorable leap, Muir recognized him and made a gesture combining respect, apology and helplessness, which only the more infuriated the noble victim. "Pretended he knew me, by gad," he said at his club, "and waved his confounded hand at me!"

Over the bridge and down the Westminster Bridge Road Muir went at furious pace. He saw a stout sergeant of police talking with a young constable, and a moment later he saw the slimmer man make an heroic grab for his arm, only to be flung senseless into the gutter. He felt, indeed, a plaything of the gods, he who an hour before had cut salaries, talked with a duke's daughter and had boasted the number of reception rooms in Muir Hall! Dully he followed the line of least resistance and found himself plodding toward Brixton. Suddenly his name was called and he beheld Philander Smith ranging alongside in a car of similar build. "Glad to see you've been converted," shouted the genial Smith. "When did you buy it?"

But Muir had no time to answer him. The only happy feature about the whole miserable affair had been that he was driving Smith's car and that Smith owed him money. And here he was an actual thief, the probable murderer of a gallant constable, proceeding to disaster at a steady pace of nine miles an hour in a machine which might not stop for a week!

Smith, that miserable uncomprehending animal, kept plying him with questions, asking foolish things about

ignition, and make-and-break sparks, and might have followed him for miles had not Muir turned on him with so ferocious a gesture that the other nervously fell behind.

Outside the Bon Marché he smashed a bicycle which had been carelessly left by the curb and struck terror into a party from a ladies' school which was crossing the road secured from all other dangers by a policeman's raised glove. Up Brixton Hill, through Streatham and Norbury, he plodded with wrists aching from the unaccustomed vibration of steering, until a narrow lane near Thornton Heath tempted him. After a few hundred yards he found that it led steeply down hill and the car gained speed. And a quarter of a mile ahead was the gleam of water. Death by drowning was singularly distasteful to him and one he feared above all others.

By the side of the lane were thick thorn hedges and high grass. Muir looked at them with apprehension; but the gleam of the water, now growing more near, struck increasing terror into his heart, and he rose from his seat and made a desperate leap for safety.

When time and space dawned once more upon his consciousness, he found that his clothes were literally torn from him, that one eye was blackened, his nose was bleeding and numerous thorns had abraded his face. The car was nowhere to be seen. He scrambled to his feet with a groan. At all costs he must instantly return to town and take legal measures to remedy the ill his reputation would certainly suffer. Half a mile away the red chimneys of a house showed up against the sky; and thither he took his painful way. Fortune for once appeared to smile, for on the high wooden gates set in a stone wall surrounding the house was a brass plate on which was inscribed, "Dr. Langdon McDermott." He essayed to open the gate, but it was fastened. As he fumbled at it, someone opened it quickly and with a cry of gladness laid a strong hand on his arm and dragged him inside. It was a tall, powerfully built man with a black beard, and hardly in

that condition of life which allowed him to take such a liberty with the owner of Muir Hall.

"One black eye," he catalogued, "a swollen nose, five hundred scratches and your nice new suit all torn to bits! I shouldn't hardly have known you. Oh, Lord! What a time I've had!"

"You cannot possibly," retorted Muir with dignity, "have had anything like the time I have had."

The other chuckled softly. "We'll go and have a bath and put on some clean clothes."

Muir followed him to the house doubtfully. Unquestionably Dr. McDermott would allow the bearded man, who was probably a servant, to show him the courtesies he desired. "I should like to see the doctor," he said.

"When you're dressed you shall," said the other. "Come on."

When he was clean and had put on some clothes—the doctor's probably—he felt better. "Now," he said, "for the doctor."

"He's in the grounds now," answered the man. "He wants to meet you. Dr. McDermott left special instruction about you."

"About me?" Muir spoke almost angrily. "I disapprove of your familiarity of tone."

The bearded man did not answer. As he took Muir's arm with a grip that was impossible to break, he whispered: "Now then, you've got to behave. Don't try any tricks on the *locum tenens*, remember!"

Muir's voice cracked with the strength of his annoyance.

"I play tricks on a *locum tenens*!" He cast a wild and angry eye to the house they were leaving. He would appeal for help to anyone he might see. But his indignation died away when he saw that the pretty red-brick house had every one of its upper windows barred.

He was in the power of a madman! He knew that no such unfortunate could bear the gaze of a strong man. He bent a piercing glance upon the other.

"Go back at once to the house," he

commanded. "Go back and sleep soundly!"

He felt his arm gripped the more tightly, as a young man, with gold-rimmed spectacles, walked swiftly toward him and nodded pleasantly.

"This is him, Doctor," announced the bearded man respectfully.

Muir took instant advantage of his freedom from the other's restraint. "There has been a terrible mistake," he whispered. "This unhappy man—"

"I know everything," replied the young man with sympathy. "I am your friend."

Muir looked at him for one horror-filled second. "You don't suppose I'm mad!" he cried.

"Certainly not," returned the medical man. "Merely a temporary indisposition."

He turned to the bearded man. "What has excited him so?" he demanded.

"He's always like that when Dr. McDermott goes away, sir," answered the man.

"But these wounds—" persisted the doctor. "Dr. McDermott seems to have the greatest confidence in you, but—"

"Why," said the man earnestly, "him and me's the best of friends. He got away this afternoon, climbed that laburnum and dropped over the wall—didn't you?" He turned to Muir.

"No," said Muir icily, "I did not. My name, sir, is Peter Muir, of Muir Hall, near Colchester. I met with an accident and came to this place to receive treatment for my injuries, and am mistaken by this egregious blunderer for a lunatic. I warn you that I shall denounce you to the General Medical Council as an unfit person to hold a diploma unless I am instantly released."

The doctor nodded still more sympathetically. "You have been deeply wronged," he said. "We'll soon have things properly arranged." With that, he walked off, giving a cheery nod of farewell.

Muir, when he beheld his hope of escape gone, flung himself down, like

that hero of Scottish romance, in a lonely mood of despair. He conceived such an aversion to his attendant's face that he even swore at him.

"That's better," said the man genially. "Now you're your own old self once more."

A few minutes later there was a ringing at the gate and a gardener opened it to admit two ladies. The elder was richly dressed and wore a certain air of importance. The younger was a quietly dressed girl, rather pretty, who was, in fact, companion to the other.

Muir was nudged violently. "Now, my lad," whispered the man, "here's Her Ladyship, and if you don't stand quiet and behave like a gentleman I'll have to report you to the doctor, and you won't like that."

But Muir was too grateful to the opportunity to heed him. He would declare himself to this lady. He would affirm his great friendliness with the daughter of His Grace of Essex. In fine, he would escape.

Lady Holsworthy beckoned imperiously to Muir's attendant.

"Oh, Mr. Aston," she said, "I have come to you as an ex-policeman to advise me what to do."

The word "policeman" stayed Muir's immediate declaration; there was an ominous sound about it.

"I have just had a wire from Sir Lewis to say that his electric car was stolen in town, and, curiously enough, it was seen to pass through Thornton Heath, driven by a low-looking, fat man who had evidently been drinking."

Involuntarily Muir groaned and drew a glance of curiosity from the girl.

"And," continued Her Ladyship, "the most extraordinary thing is that we have just found the car in our own lake. A most grossly impertinent act, it seems, to steal one's car and then deposit it in one's own lake. Now Aston, as an ex-police sergeant, who was the low-looking, fat man?"

Aston was equal to the occasion. "It's my opinion," he said oracularly, "it's my opinion it was the work of a gang. Have you wired to the police station at Croydon?"

"I did," said the girl, who was still staring at the bewildered Muir.

"That's right, miss," answered Aston. "Life imprisonment isn't bad enough for a crime like that."

Lady Holsworthy saw the interest evinced by her companion.

"Don't be nervous, my dear," she said kindly. "He isn't dangerous. I've known him for years. The poor creature imagines he is the Queen of Sheba. A most extraordinary delusion, but then," she added somewhat vaguely, "no cross, no crown."

Staggered by these successions of blows, Muir could only turn away in tortured silence. The Queen of Sheba!

Aston nudged him gently. "Tell the lady who you are," he commanded.

"No, no," the girl said quickly.

"He's proud of it, miss," said Aston kindly. "Who are you?" he demanded. Muir gazed at the group. It seemed that Lady Holsworthy regarded him with a touch of suspicion, and the girl had watched him closely from the first moment of their meeting; he recalled her quickness in notifying Croydon's police, and his courage was gone.

"I am the Queen of Sheba," he muttered sullenly.

"A lesson for all of us," declared Lady Holsworthy, shaking her head. "How terribly sad!"

"Ask him to dance," whispered Aston hoarsely. "It puts him in a good temper."

"It's only charitable," said Her Ladyship. "Dance," she commanded.

In the history of terpsichorean art there has never been anything so pathetically ridiculous as Muir's first *pas seul*; there was no sense of rhythm in him. Elephantine movements devoid of grace, these were his ideas of dancing; and he persisted until shortness of breath stretched him on the grass, a palpitating mass of inefficiency.

"Very nice, indeed," commented Lady Holsworthy. She turned to the girl. "He was kicked on the head by a donkey at Margate many years ago. His wife is quite a charming person. I wonder," she added, opening her reticule, if he still likes my dandelion tof-

fee?" She held out a sticky brown cube of it to him. "It is so good for the liver."

Muir, without a word, seized the mass and put it in his mouth. The cold stare of the younger of the two discomposed him strangely. He had read of women detectives, and for all he knew this might be one. He detested toffee in any form, and this was bitterly obnoxious. He tried to conceal it behind his tongue; but Her Ladyship was used to such malingerers. Her toffee could never become a popular sweetmeat.

"Say 'Ah,'" she commanded suddenly.

Muir instantly perceived the despicable meanness of her device; for one may not say "Ah" and successfully conceal the presence of a large mass of yellow toffee. He compromised with a "Hm."

"That won't do," she cried severely. "Say 'Ah.'"

Thus was Peter Muir forced to take his medicine. Lady Holsworthy smiled again.

"I find," she said to her companion, "that these unfortunate creatures are very much like children in some things. Little Tommy Carter, the cowman's son, always tries, surreptitiously, to eject my dandelion toffee. They don't seem to understand how good it is for them." She turned to Aston. "Please let me know if you hear anything of the thief. Sir Lewis is perfectly furious and is going to offer a large reward. Good day, Aston."

An hour before Muir was taken to his bedroom, the *locum tenens*, who still breathed sympathy, brought him a sleeping draught which was to bring relief to his insomnia. With utter disregard of the stranger whose clothes he was wearing, Muir poured the syrupy concoction into a pocket and handed the empty glass back to the unsuspecting doctor with the remark that he enjoyed the flavor. At midnight, when the house was silent and he should have been sleeping under the influence of bromide of potassium and chloral hydrate, he made his undetected escape. He had borne in mind the laburnum

tree by which the veritable Queen of Sheba had taken his adventurous way, and swung himself into a bed of nettles and so rode into London on a milk cart.

Never in the course of a long business career had Muir been more severe with his employees than on the morning he returned to his office. The agony, attendant on his assumption of the role of Sheba's Queen, was worked off on his head bookkeeper, whom he dismissed. A stenographer suffered for his dance, and it fell to Barwell's unlucky lot to atone for Her Ladyship's yellow toffee. Barwell was given a month in which to procure a new position.

"What have I done?" he cried in despair.

"It's what you haven't done," said the other. "Go back to your desk; I'm busy."

The following day he expected his solicitor to report progress in the matter of clearing his fair fame, and hearing a step in his private room, looked up to welcome the lawyer as he supposed, when he found himself face to face with a pretty girl who had actually entered the presence unannounced and accompanied by a black poodle indecorously adorned with red ribbons.

"Bless my soul!" cried the astonished Muir. "What have we here?"

The lady took a seat and looked smilingly at the speaker. Behind her Barwell was acting queerly. He stood in the doorway and stretched beseeching hands toward the girl with the dog.

"You are looking ill, father," said the girl, smiling at the agitated Barwell. "I expect they work you too much here."

"Is this your daughter?" said Muir severely.

"Yes," said Barwell nervously.

"Madam," said Peter Muir, "I am a busy man, expecting my lawyer, and I do not like dogs. If you wish to talk with your father—"

"I don't," she interrupted pleasantly. "I came to talk to you. I'm sorry you don't like dogs," she added. "This one is so clever. You'll like this dog."

"And why," cried Peter with the

rising inflection of wrath, "should I like that absurd animal?"

"He dances so well," she said. "You'd like to see him." She turned to the poodle and made him sit up and beg. "We call him the Queen of Sheba," she continued. "It seems an absurd name for a gentleman dog, but he answers to it." She eyed Muir closely.

The Queen of Sheba! When he found courage to look her full in the face, he could see it was the quietly dressed girl who had accompanied Lady Holsworthy. He remembered that one of Barwell's daughters was companion and secretary to a baronet's lady. The girl's next remark brought more unhappy memories. "One always has to give him toffee to make him dance." She looked innocently at Muir. "Have you any toffee?"

Poor Barwell pinched himself to see if he was indeed awake. His employer seemed ill at ease and looked at him as though appealing for help. This strange talk of toffee and queens gave him much uneasiness. "Is it true," his daughter demanded, "that you are going to get a new manager and reduce my father's salary?"

Muir rose to his feet a trifle unsteadily. He was cornered, and by a clever woman who had a strong face.

"My dear young lady," he said in his most paternal manner, "I am not that sort of man. No, no, I am going to get your father an assistant—a young man from Chicago."

Barwell looked from one to another with astonishment.

"Not twenty-four hours ago you told me to go," he gasped.

"Barwell," said Muir impressively, "I was trying you. You have not been found wanting."

There was still something of fear in his face as he glanced at the girl and the begging poodle.

Miss Barwell looked at him with a smile. "You're a wiser man than I thought, Mr. Muir." She slipped her arm into that of her blinking father. "I'm frightfully hungry," she said. "Let's go out and have a really expensive lunch. Good-bye, Mr. Muir."

UNCHARTED

By LEO CRANE

*Had ye made me a chart in a rightful way,
And had marked the reefs in the seas ye
sailed,
Then my treasure ships had not all failed,
And I'd hold the course today.*

—The Cry of the Captain.

IT was far enough removed from the city to have retained the quaint old-fashioned village touches: a ragged cluster of houses, a forge, a church crowning the distant hill-top and at the crossroad, of course, a tavern. The houses were without pretension, that modesty from which springs the picturesque. Phlox and dahlias ranked in the gardens, and hollyhocks reared curiously over the hedges. When there was a wall, it would be sure to have mossed edges and a footstool of violets in spring-time. The stream reflecting the highroad's low arch and the willows came through flowered banks and always sang drowsily of poetry and peace. The meadows by it were made for flocks and the tinkling of bells.

They were simple folk, these villagers. Seldom any of them went to the city, and only occasionally did one of the sons seek the University, and fame, perhaps, whence he did not return. Once did they set out on the highroad, lured by the sunlight of ambition, there could be only village serenity to tempt again, and this for failures and weaklings. At the top of Mile Hill began the crumbling wall of the churchyard, the resting place of villagers who had not heard the city's cry.

A little back from the highroad, its eaves slightly drooping, the ridgepole

a trifle bent with age, stood the Martin house. A low doorway, a leaning chimney, from the top of which bricks had fallen, and some wisps of drifting smoke presented the picture. Here lived old Martin and his daughter. She was a young girl with braided hair, simply sweet to see, having the large, wondering eyes of the village folk. Since the going of her mother out over the crest of Mile Hill, life had been somewhat dull in this quaint house by the highroad, old Martin seeming to think his daughter a sacrifice to his age. And the village had talked of it.

But one day, perhaps in the new glow of spring, she met David Faulkner. No doubt he came by the highroad, singing. After that the ripple of the stream under the arch had a sweeter note and the flower blooms unfolded a new glory. Old Martin argued until his tongue grew tired and his head seemed to have the palsy with his rueful shaking of it, but she married David Faulkner, a fine, willful lad, and they lived in the old house together, little different in their modes of life, save that they were now three where had been only two.

Now there was a glad light in Martha's eyes, and as she sat out the few idle moments that come to a village woman she would watch the highroad and the few creaking carts toiling slowly down its sunlit length, and she would have visions at these times of a carriage with gay horses and a young man riding, a fine, gallant fellow, no doubt, who kissed his hand to her as he went his way to the city. Great was to be her son, the pride of

her heart and the light of her eyes. And sometimes she would whisper these things into her David's ear, and he would smile as if he only half believed and less than half understood them.

David Faulkner had been a double farmer. He had tilled the soil until his skin was as brown as the earth he turned, while meantime he garnered a crop of oats as wild as any sown in the village taproom. But all this had passed, so he said, when Martha came to him, her gray eyes full of trust. Ah, it had passed, as he said, and the wild growth grew no more in his heart. Sometimes old Martin would glance at him shrewdly, as if he doubted this; and it was in the anxious time that one night the old one came home alone.

"Where's David?" asked Martha, trembling a little.

"I came crost the fields from the village," said her father, feeling along the mantelshelf for his pipe. He hesitated, as if he would rather not continue.

"Oh, father, what is—what has happened to David?"

"Nothing, to be sure," he replied tersely, "but, lassie, there's the Old Harry to pay in the village, and it was not the sight for you to see. David will be home in the morning . . ."

She put her arms about his neck and begged of him:

"Tell me, father, what is it?"

So he sat down in his great chair at the hearth and drew her to his knee.

"'Tis nothing, dearie, so do not be frightened; only I would not have the folk talking of yeh, an' when I saw that David had taken a bit too much of the spirit, why . . ."

"Father!" she protested.

"Yes, 'tis true, daughter; but wasn't he always the willful lad? An' I thought he would bring sorrow to yeh; but there—there—'tis the first since yeh cared for him, an' 'twill be the last when he knows the shame of it."

Her lips were white and the pain was about her heart.

"Where is he?" she asked. "I'll go—"

"No, no," said the old man sternly. "What can yeh be thinking of, lass, an' you—but David is a fine lad, to be sure. I never expected he would keep the faith as he has, and this is but once in a great while. So be quiet an' don't weep. The best of us go astray, an' the Good Book says that Christ fell three times. Be a brave little woman that yeh are. I managed it so George Carling'd look after him till the morning, an' then he will know how you've waited, an' he'll be 'shamed of himself, which is a good feeling for a willful lad. 'Twill cure him, all in all. An' no one will know, ever, save the old man, who doesn't count for long."

So he took her up in his arms and pillowed her brown head on his shoulder, and they sat so until the dark came on and her sobs had ceased.

"He promised—he promised he would not ever . . ." she said.

"'Tis the way they have," replied the old man unthinkingly.

Then she sprang up, facing him for the first time with an angry light in her eyes.

"Once I heard mother say that same of you!" she cried out, the grief in her rising as a helpless rage.

"Ah, daughter," he said humbly, "but for mother—no one knows like the man that has been burnt in the fire. But for mother . . ."

"What a woman has done a woman may do," she murmured, sinking into his arms again as if she were very tired.

The old man had started at her words. As a signal these seemed to set in motion things long past and dead. His fingers trembled and the pipe dropped from them, a frail clay thing, and shivered to pieces on the hearth. "What a woman has done a woman may do," he thought over and over again. A bad bit of logic—since there are women and women, and men and men; a reasoning that may be kept up forever, the world never quite rid of unreasoning women nor of willful men. He looked mourn-

fully down at his broken pipe; he looked at the frail thing in his arms, his one blossom from the life garden. A stern expression came to his withered features. He had warned her against this man—this man who had promised to keep the faith. David Faulkner had fought a losing fight. However, thought the old man, out of defeats come victories—only in this anxious time defeats mean so much.

Now she had gone off to sleep. He saw the half-soothed sobs checking on her lips and her breath came as if she dreamed doubtful things. The old man sat still, looking into the fire, and wondering what would come of this experience. Would it be a minor or a major tragedy? Would David Faulkner take up the fight anew, or allow his forces to be routed?

Suddenly the old man started from his reverie to listen intently. He heard a slow, dragging step on the garden walk; and now there sounded a fumble at the latch. The door swung inward and the rose light of the fire streamed over a strange figure on the threshold.

"David!" whispered the old man, holding up his hand in warning.

David Faulkner swayed a little, then caught at the door and pulled himself as erect as a stem. Gently the old man rose, lifting the girl, and carried her slowly across the room to the stair and up to bed. It seemed he possessed all his youthful vigor, aided by a woman's tenderness, as he did this. His movement was so careful that she did not stir.

Then he came down into the room again, shutting the doors behind him. Standing on the hearth he viewed the young man with a stern air of judgment. David had dropped down and sat as one condemned. Slowly came the words, bitter, accusing, pitiless:

"I warned her against yeh. I told her the twelfth month always found the Faulkners in the gutter. With the holidays they go to the dogs, I told her. But she loved yeh, an' she would not believe."

"Don't," begged the other.

His face was not without its claim to sympathy—a certain breadth between the well-shaded eyes, a certain touch of sweetness in the lips. But the old man was wrought up to denunciation.

"A fine time yeh picked for your harvesting of the old crop! You who promised yeh would always keep the faith, only to break it when most needed. Suppose it should be tonight . . ."

"Don't," said the other pitifully.

There was no mercy for him.

"Suppose it should be tonight, David Faulkner! You're like my pipe there, all broken. A patient one might mend yeh, but would it be worth the heartache?"

The other shrank so from his words that it seemed the old man would relent a little—relent only to sink the barb deeper with a prophecy.

"Don't yeh fear, though, David Faulkner. She's not the lass to put you by for falling onct. An' yeh can fight it down, lad—well, fight it down. What a man has done a man can do. But don't yeh ever boast of it, David Faulkner; don't boast till the end of the battle. Yeh come of the Faulkners, an' there's the marrow in the bone . . ."

He paused, for a faint cry had sounded in the room above. The old man hurried up the stairs. A little while, and he came down again, his face white and his words quavering.

"She's asking for yeh, but 'tis best not now. Go up the road to Cairne's place; tell the women to come, then go on to the doctor's."

The young man gasped and drew himself up with an effort.

"Then—it will be tonight, then," he said fearfully.

"Aye, lad, it will be tonight."

Sobered, David Faulkner sped up the road. The cold wind cut his face and he welcomed it, his head whirling, his heart beating furiously, his whole being and brain fighting the shame of himself. That night began anew his keeping of the faith, for another life had come into the fight.

II

By and by, a few days it seemed, and he had grown out of his wee babyhood: a toddling little fellow now, clinging to his mother's dress before attempting the serious problem of a wavering stagger across the floors; now a curious urchin, kicking the toes of his shoes out in the garden. Then came the days of make believe, when he was happiest exploring a wilderness conjured up from the meadow grasses. It was at this time, perhaps, that he first knew the girl, and no doubt they made daisy chains for each other; and at length, an awkward lad haled out of his shyness into the games, he kissed her.

After this she was his sweetheart. Of course he suffered a young boy's martyrdom, listening to the chaffing with all a boy's shame. He came to be a shy youth, spending much of his time alone in the woods and fields, save when he was accompanied by the slip of a girl whose big, wondering eyes regarded him in a vague, trusting way. Often he would talk to her of his plans, the plans he feared to have others know, of famous days to come when all his ships would have sailed homeward laden from their voyages. Just now these were all riding the high seas of youth, their dreamy clouds of canvas flung to vague and varying breezes, their courses shifting with each sunrise and the pilots changed at every sunset; but always were these on the way to a glorious port, a land of greatest triumph from which they would return bearing riches. And so all the days of spring-time, with his ventures on the seas.

Strange were the thoughts that drifted through his boy's mind. The world was an egg and he would stand it on end. Boylike, he gazed across the thorny paths of accomplishments to the goal, where all gigantic plans would be complete. He looked out upon life from the security of the fields, seeing on the one hand the grasses stirred by gentle winds, and on the other an amber city in the clouds. The highroad, a hot and yellow trail of dust, hard as stone beneath, he did not see at all.

So he grew tall and straight, the faith of purpose in his dark-gray eyes, an almost saddened expression which he could not know for his own, but which, when he saw the very tone reflected in his mother's eyes, he wondered at. She seemed to watch him always with an evanescent fear in her glances, the dread of something that might come to pass. Filled with the thoughts of a grave youth, he more than once wondered what lay behind those prayerful eyes as she looked on him. He did not know that she still had visions of a carriage upon the highroad, with gay horses, and a young man riding, a fine, willful fellow, who would smile and kiss his hand to her as he went away. And sometimes she dreamed of his returning, his eyes bright with the triumph of honors gained and the strength of men in his face.

Then, one day, it seemed all in the passing of a moment, he was swept into manhood through the knowledge of a new love. They had come across the fields together, along the very path where they once had played at making daisy chains. She had been the keeper of all his plans, the earliest of which she had most treasured. He had pointed out the ships upon the sea, and together they had watched these sail into the west and the purple twilight, both wondering when these would return. Unless all the armadas perish, he must now go in search of them—go by the highroad in the sun and the dust, upon the floor of ragged stone, to find a man's venture if he would mold one out of the day dreams of a boy. And they talked of his setting out to the city, where the search would begin.

Suddenly there came to him, like a pang, the realization that she would be left behind, alone, to drift as she would.

"What will you do all the days when I am gone?" he asked.

"I suppose I must wait for any ships that may be mine," she answered, hesitating a little over the words, but finishing the sentence with a brave smile—the smile of a woman's patience, she who can do no more than wait. He

seemed surprised at this; he had never thought of the ships she had set sail.

"And you, too, have had dreams like mine?" he asked, wondering why she had not told him of these, forgetting he had been too busy telling of his own.

"Sometimes I have thought out things," she said.

"You never spoke to me of them."

"I never thought you—would care to know," she tried to explain.

"I told you all of mine," he reproached her, a little tone of grievance in his voice.

"Yes—but yours were always wondrous things, filled with conquests, and there was scarcely room for me. And my dreams were of other people. I—I had very little part in them, indeed." She finished with a nervous laugh.

"I never thought of that before," he said, laughing, too. "And what you say of me is true, very true. I have been so busy planning that I never thought of the people—the other people—I must meet, and fight, and hate, and—love, perhaps; and I do not believe I ever considered growing old with them. I sent all the ships abroad without crews . . ."

"You were on board," she said softly.

"And you."

He turned to look at her; he caught her glance for a moment, and after that she did not look away from him; and he plunged into his first real planning, his finest plan. Little he then thought how great the venture of his love would grow—how all the others might fade into the sunset and the night, returning never, while this would outlast them all. One does not skillfully chart the love of one's life. It is a current that fastens upon idle ships, and they sweep before it, meeting a spindrift that is pain, out into unmarked seas, on and on, the fate of it binding to the end of the long, long voyage. Even if there be a wreck, the swirl of it grips the racking timbers until the last of the treasure ships is safe from the sight of men.

"You and I . . ." he said.

And that night he came to know that

her dreams had been peopled only by himself. A thousand characters he had been in them, brave and true and famous, and she had loved them all. So when he went back over the fields alone, the first of her woman's pledges on his lips, he realized what a weighty thing it is to be a man when one has been so long a boy.

Next morning they watched after him until the coach had become but a speck on the highroad. He wondered once again at the grave, the aching speculation in his mother's eyes as he kissed her. He felt glad indeed that there would always be two watchers to see his ships sail home.

And the rushing train carried a man to the city. Back in the fields there lived the memory of a boy, and two women loved it when they were lonely and weary of the waiting.

III

He found himself isolated, or so his situation seemed to him, in a little room at the end of a narrow hall and far up a precipitous stair. The one window of the room overlooked a street shaded by trees, but these were different from those columns in the quiet aisles of his dreamland wood. No ferns grew at the gnarled roots of these, and no mosses. These were deformed by the harsh bricks of the pavement; they were a discouraged row of sentinels, raggedly dressed, old, stunted. When the autumn came they grew as withered as lean fagots, and the leaves dropped away from their limbs and swirled across the pavements pitifully. When the winter fastened its frost upon them they were bare and bleak and shivering. He compared them to his new life, which seemed as gray and lonely.

A month or two of this isolation, and he had found a companion. In fact, he had been driven from his solitude to share the company of a man who had been quite as lonely as himself. And together they sat out many nights that would have been mournful had they

not known each other. From different parts of the country, together they united a common hatred for the gray, bleak streets and the starved trees of the city. And after many talks, each knew something of the other's past and the vision of his future.

When the year rolled around Faulkner decided he would not go home, for the expense of living had been more than he had expected, and there came a chance to balance the account through a position. Crawford, the other man—they roomed together now—had suggested this, and he snapped up the first offering, the shipping room of a warehouse on the wharves, where he sat at a high, dusty desk piled with bills of lading, and learned something of the world's marts.

When the term began again he went back to the law. He would be some three years at it. He sometimes wondered why he had selected so dry and grim and somewhat merciless a profession. Worrying over this at length, he went sluggishly to his books. Crawford noticed his morose condition, and had watched the change in him from activity to indifference. He saw the lack of spirit, the evidence of a man going stale.

Crawford was a big, cheery fellow, with a rumbling bass voice that could carry volumes of sympathy in a very few words. He clapped Faulkner on the shoulder one night when he saw there must soon be an easement or a decided let down. Faulkner gave a quick, nervous exclamation.

"Stop the grind for a little, old man," said the deep voice kindly, "or else you'll regret it later. Come, come, we'll take a turn about. You don't get into the air half enough for a fellow used to the fields. Put the book aside."

And Crawford tossed it into a corner for him. Faulkner stretched back in his chair and seemed relieved that someone else had decided his course for a night at least. He said moodily:

"Do you know, Crawford, I'm beginning to believe that I have made a mistake. I don't like that stuff. Bah!

It's as dry as an old log. And the detestable grind . . ."

"I know—I know," said the other. "But you'll come back to it refreshed if you drop it for a season, just a night or two, and ease up. Drop it and look about at something else."

"At what?" asked Faulkner, a wan smile coming to his face.

"Why—why, the town! Gad, it's merry enough when one searches. Take a peep at this great, booming, sinful city. See how miserable others are, making believe that they are happy. Then you'll thank God that you are yourself."

"I don't think I care for that sort of dive hunting."

"Well, who asked you to? A man can ease up the harness without plunging straight to the devil. Let me see! Harris might give us a line on something new. You've met Harris, the painter."

"The fellow who came to see you last week? Yes. He seems so intense about whatever he is doing. I suppose he doesn't have to grind."

"You can bet that he does, though," replied Crawford, catching up his coat. "But he evens the strain. I go over to his place now and then, nights. He has a lot of good stuff to show one, and several of us meet there once a week. Come along."

They went down the street talking, and in the brisk, cooling air Faulkner's spirits revived somewhat until he exhibited quite a timid gaiety. When they took a car, he noticed the direction and said in surprise:

"Why, you're heading toward the river, old man."

"Certainly. His place is on the river—the most unique situation in the town for such a fellow. I'll gamble that you'll agree when you see it. Imagine a house in the heart of the city with the river washing in at its foundations. There it is, that great, gray, teeming river, spread out before old Harris day and night. No wonder the man's a painter; but I suppose only a painter could have appreciated the place and sought it out. I've been

there in the morning, when the mists made the water ghostly, and the boats tooted and picked their ways like so many children astray; and then at night, such a night as this, why, with the lights gleaming out of the black, and here and there the dull red glow of a lantern on a barge, it's a picture every time. I tell you, it takes an artistic chap like Harris to find what is good to see. We're bats in a cave compared to him."

And so Crawford rattled on as they went across the city. At length Faulkner followed him up a dark stair. He heard the low tinkle of a guitar, a sweetly seductive strain from a Spanish dance, and then he saw a strip of light on the landing above as the door was opened for them. There was a jolly company in the studio. Harris came forward and welcomed them royally, calling out the names of the others in his genial, informal way. These were young men and women, a half-dozen merry ones, chatting and smoking.

Crawford, among old friends, plunged into an argument cheerfully; Faulkner lolled on a couch and glanced about him. The warmth of the room's tone touched him as a pleasing tonic. There was a soft light, the lamp having a rich shade of autumnal coloring in modulated reds and browns that left the walls in shadow with here and there the penciling of light upon gold suggesting a picture in a gilded frame. The divans were backed with pillows of dull hues, the low chairs invited restful reclining, and there were sober rugs upon a polished floor. Under the lamp shade, where the white light fell on the table, shone silver and glassware, a thousand iridescent points glinting from the old decanters.

Faulkner accepted and sipped some brandy, entering into conversation with the man who sat beside him. Their talk was but fragmentary. After two years' steady grind, a life all too gray, this transformation appealed in color and sensation to one emotional. Faulkner's nerves enjoyed a pleasant tingle of relief. In a receptive mood, he allowed himself to sink into restful con-

templation, anxious to watch dreamily without stirring or speaking, to have the charm of it ensnare him.

Then from the ensemble grew softly the dominant thing. He was conscious of this first when the glow of the lamp touched a woman's hair, dull red upon gold. A rich tone, having the ruddiness of fire, showed in her heavy tresses as she turned languidly to observe him. Her eyes half closed when she saw that he too looked at her, and she turned away momentarily, but not before he had seen into her eyes, large, half-curious eyes, heavy-lidded, alluring. Shortly after this she came across the room to his place and began talking of idle things. Faulkner forgot the others, and saw her only in a pale rose light. She chatted in an interesting way, but it was her effect in the atmosphere that pleased him. So long had he been apart from the sweet companionship of women that Faulkner found himself listening and with no thought other than to listen. He cared little for that which she might say, only he wished she would sit beside him a long time, allowing him to note the clear freshness of her face, the red curve of her lips, the shadows of her lashes. Gradually, as a painter might, he found himself pleased with the soft contours of her arms and the warmth of them through the lace of her sleeve and the sweep of her gown over her knees. Faulkner stared across the room when she mentioned her husband, and saw a dark, interesting-looking fellow who lounged against the mantel. Then he turned to see her face again, finding the appeal of color as interesting as before.

Abruptly she said to him, as if she sought a new method of entertainment to attract him from his retirement:

"And is this the very first time you have been here? Then you haven't seen the river front from the balcony. We all envy Mr. Harris and his river. Come—I'll show you."

He followed to a wide window and stepped after her through the casement to a narrow balcony. The kiss of a

swift, pure wind sped out of the dark and caught his cheek. Turning from the lighted room into the shadow, he could not see at once, but he drew in his breath sharply when he sensed the river and the freedom of its wind. It was a soft, still night; a trifle of mist clung about the fragment of moon that drifted above, and enough murkiness hung low over the water to give it the effect of a vague place, wide, far reaching and mystic. As Crawford had said, the waves came in close to the foundations of the house, which stood on an embankment, the walls of it going down to a narrow strip of beach. To the right, looming as a ghostly thing, stretched out a pier, the lamp at its far end lighting and dimming fitfully. Moored was a great barge, cargo-piled, a huge, lumpy thing, motionless, as a somnolent, unnatural monster, with one red, unwinking eye. From the dark marshes came the drowsy oboe tone of a towboat's call, voicing the solemnity of the sea, and out of the mist sounded the low sighing swish of a propeller.

Faulkner, warmed by the liquor he had taken, leaned on the rail and drank in the mystic charm of the river night. His poetry had been of the scented fields, amid the grasses and the dew, and sweet; but this opened a new dreamland, wet with the river fog, entrancing with the lure of the deep.

"Do you like it?" she asked gently.

"Yes, yes," he said, sighing, and in the instant she turned toward him he was conscious of something that made him catch his breath again sharply, as if touched by a throb of old pain, for it was the odor of the grasses and the fields he had long lost. Gripping the rail of the balcony, so tight that his hands hurt, he drank in the sweetness of her, of her hair and bloom-scented gown, and his senses reeled in the fragrance of the meadows and that other woman who had shared the visions of his boyhood. But a touch like this had been wanted to loose his half-starved dreams from the grayness. Slowly the river filled with his ventures once again, sweeping grandly, as he had so often seen them, out to an

uncharted sea. Vague and unsatisfying were these shapes, but by him stood the memory of that other woman and together they watched the visionary sails.

He came to himself with a start.

"I beg your pardon," he said; "I beg your pardon."

He had touched her hand upon the rail; unconsciously his fingers had closed over it, and now he drew back, wondering in some confusion what she would say.

"Shall we go in?" she asked, as if she had not noticed it.

"I could stay here forever—watching this river," he said, slowly turning to it again. "It is filled with dreams."

"I believe you are a poet," she laughed, catching up a strand of her hair and putting it back. "Harris ought to have told us that when you came. But"—with a little shiver—"you would find it cold and misty in the mornings, wouldn't you?"

"That is the pity," he said sadly. "There is always the morning and the mist of reality."

So he went back in the room and drank more of Harris's brandy. Later, after a song or two, he left with Crawford. In the street the latter asked him how he liked the place.

"Very much," answered Faulkner. "But you have made me realize a very bitter thing tonight, old man."

"Why—why, surely not bitter," said Crawford. "I only meant to cheer you a bit."

"I am not headed right—not right, at all. But it's too late to talk of remedy now." He stopped and waved his hand toward the dark line of river beneath a paling sky. "I should have had such a life," he said. "Something with color in it—something of dreams . . ."

But Crawford credited this to the brandy and the possibility that he had fallen victim to the seductive and somewhat shallow charms of Mrs. Janney. It had been a common experience, he knew; he had felt the same under three rounds of stiff brandy such as Harris

served. It was something one could be able to outgrow, thought Crawford.

After this he went about his uncongenial work in a hopeless manner. He was filled with a vague unrest, a feeling that he had been too heavily handicapped, if not imposed on. Something sat with him each day and constantly lured him from the self-appointed task. In spare time he would go adrift in the streets, restlessly seeking diversion, troubled always with the knowledge that his search would be fruitless. He would try to free himself from an almost hated personality, a thing to be eluded, and he would come back to the gray street exhausted. Already he classed himself with the failures, but he struggled on with the fight as bravely as he could. He was like an athlete going stale, but doggedly he meant to keep up until the break. That there was a break coming he knew; the only doubt in his mind concerned the method. Would he fling all away and go derelict out on that uncharted sea? Would he creep back beaten to the port of sailing? Dared he the first—could he submit to the other? An indefinite desire possessed him at times to go as far as the inconstant wind might carry, and then drift where life might direct. It was too late to change! Was it too late to change? He would be useless anyway. He could not decide. He had worn out that confidence with which he had started; he was without stamina on which to build anew. As if weak, helpless, hesitant, for some weeks he awaited the inevitable—that decision which a Higher Power must force upon him, a relief from his present, a prophecy as to his future. The past had been a dream, a brilliant, bubblelike thing which had burst. He gazed into a void.

And it was during this period of doubt that Crawford came in one evening to find the room dark, unlighted save for the gray of the street that struggled with the pale reflections of the earlier lighted lamps. Crawford stumbled over a form on the floor.

"What's up?" he called out nervously. "Faulkner! Faulkner!"

Then he hastily lighted a gas jet to view a bedraggled figure. He lifted Faulkner to the bed, loosened his collar, and tried to discover if he had a pulse. Catching down a decanter from the cupboard, he poured out a portion of brandy and forced it between the teeth of the inanimate. A crumpled letter lay on the floor.

Slowly, gradually, Faulkner came to himself, stretching out his arms and grasping feebly at nothing. He gasped and sat up, staring, steadying himself with one hand propped behind him, and for some few minutes he made no effort to speak, but looked across the room as one lost in a melancholy madness.

Crawford shook him by the shoulder, saying:

"What's the matter with you, Faulkner? What's wrong? I'll chase down the hall and have up the doctor. Gad, but you gave me a turn! How do you feel now?"

"I'm—I'm all right, I guess," half whispered the other. "I must have toppled over. Was I there long—a long time? But you couldn't tell—I—"

"You're overworking again," said Crawford. "Too much of the grind, my boy, too much—and too much brandy, eh?"

Suddenly Faulkner reached out and caught the other's hand. He gripped it with a breaking clutch. His words came in dry, husky sobs. "What's that?" asked Crawford, as if he doubted. Then Faulkner broke out in an unnatural cry, an hysterical protest, repeating:

"She's dead—dead; she's dead . . ."

His head went down on his arm and he sat that way for a long time, grasping the other man's hand in a grip that tightened when the sobs shook him. Looking up, he said as if he had reached decision:

"Give me more of that brandy."

Crawford poured him out a large drink and he gulped it down. Few words passed between them. In his

emotional way he had told Crawford many things, things confirmed by such a grief, and Crawford knew the poignancy of this now that the irrevocable had been disclosed. Faulkner said a second time:

"Give me more of that brandy."

Crawford hesitated.

"More!" said Faulkner fiercely.

"It's not the best thing to—"

Faulkner snarled at him like an animal, sprang from the bed and staggered across the room weakly. Waveringly he caught at the table's edge and grasped the neck of the decanter; then he swayed and would have fallen but for Crawford, who had stepped behind him and who dropped him into a chair close by. But he had not released his hold on the bottle. He dragged it across the table to him. Then he looked up at the man who sought to dissuade him from this, his face having a ghastly tone in the fitful light of the gas. Suddenly his lips writhed into a careless leer.

"I know now," he said from dry lips, as if he made choice. "I know

now. She's dead, and what do I care!"

The wreck drifted.

It was far enough from the city to have retained a village serenity. At the top of Mile Hill began the crumbling wall of the churchyard, and at the crossroad there was, of course, a tavern. An old man passed this place one evening as he came from work in the fields. His shoulders were bent now as had been the shoulders of old Martin before him, and his hair had silvered. A long time had passed since he had wed Martha, who would be waiting, a wistful, watching light in her gray eyes. There was a patient, half-fearing reflection that had come into his own. As he crossed the road by the tavern someone rose from the steps of it and shambled forward, greeting:

"Man, they tell me that young Master David's home again!"

Old Faulkner paused abruptly, as if pierced to the heart by an idea.

"No, no," he said, wincing. "Tell 'em all that *Old David's* home again!"



SONNET

By MAUDE BATTERSHALL

O DEATH, if I were sure of quick release
 And Atropos cowered near me with her shears
 To cut the fateful cord and give me peace,
 Out of each hour I'd wring the joy of years.
 Too frail to bear the stress and strain of love,
 Too weak to suffer, too unused to pain,
 A spirit with desire the world to move
 A body by the spirit torn in twain,
 To fling them both into the vat of life,
 To weld them in one mad, unthinking deed,
 And then to die, to rest, to leave the strife
 Never again to want or yearn or need—
 Spendthrift or niggard Death, which shall it be?
 If I dare greatly, wilt thou come to me?

CHESTERFIELDIANA

By JEAN WRIGHT

For the Guidance of those Fair Ladies who are possessed of Personal Charm and Character, but by Force of Circumstance are not skilled to Break a Lance on the Field of Manners.

HATH thy Spouse suddenly been placed on the Seats of the Mighty?

Lend me thine Ear.

Trust not to thy Native Intelligence, nor to the glory of thy Position at Home.

Nay. Acquire as quickly as may be the services of a French Dressmaker and a Social Secretary. For there is no pitfall for the feet of the unwary that these Two may not bridge.

Also—

The Brute loveth his Food.

Therefore—

Lay as thy Corner Stone a Cook, choosing rather Her who hath the Soul of an Interior Decorator and chronic Temperamentitis, than Her who keepeth her Floors scrubbed to a torturing slickness.

Mayhap—

It happeneth that thy Spouse loveth not the Continental Breakfast and desireth Beefsteak.

I say unto You, give him a Smile and a Kiss, but let the newly acquired Butler give him the Beefsteak and the Morning Paper.

Thus may his Soul be Satisfied.

The Family Breakfast Table is the Final Word of Barbarism.

Myself—

Give me a Cup of Coffee and Solitude, and I begin to Buckle on my Armor.

It is the Afternoon and Evening—particularly the Evening—that is intended for Human Intercourse and the Affairs of Life.

Again lend me thine Ear.

Costly thy Habit as His Purse can buy.

But—

Unless the Habit be cut upon the Lines of Today, the Lilies of the Field are better clothed.

And more Intelligent.

For they remain in the Field.

When thou goest Abroad, Dress thyself to please thy Fellow Woman.

At Home, a Rose in the Hair and a Bit of Lace used with Wisdom are better than much Gilding.

An intimate knowledge of the Rudiments of Arithmetic and Spelling is not necessary to Success in Life.

Better a wide Fund of Misinformation and a Facility of Expression.

Have a Care.

The most agreeable Other in a Conversational Duet is She who listeneth with Enthusiasm, and a Delicately implied Awakening of the Intelligence.

For—

The Eternal Masculine loveth to Please and to Protect; but above all he loveth to Teach.

Let Him.

Use thy pocketful of the Small Change of Conversation to fill the Gaps.

Thus wilt thou soon acquire a Reputation.

Also—

The Fine Art of Conversation.

The Fine Art of Conversation closely resembleth the other Arts.

It is but the Ability to fall in line with a Shopworn Topic.

And—

By Skillful Treatment and a Fine Audacity, turn Platitude into Epigram.

Therefore—

Read and Ponder.

THE MISTRESS OF MATH.

By MARY GLASCOCK

WHEN she was ready for flight from school—a very fashionable one, where young ladies were crammed with all necessary knowledge and made properly presentable for the frivolities of life—her guardian confessed that she no longer had any fortune. He never exactly explained how nor why, but mumbled something about speculations gone wrong; and there she was, with a fluffy graduation gown—how glad she was she had decided upon real Valenciennes for the ruffles!—and a very small gold piece in her purse, having squandered most of that month's allowance upon American Beauties for the girls. She had been a sort of little princess in school, with no wisely restraining parents—only a generous, careless guardian, who never troubled about trifles.

Her eyes—sapphire eyes—were reddened about the rims for a day or two. Then she dashed a basin of good cold water in her face—a tonic for oozing courage—twisted her pale-gold tumbling hair into a proper knot, eliminating the spreading bow of ribbon, and went down to the principal with the gathered report cards of her senior year in her hand, whereupon mathematics, geometry, maybe trigonometry—whatever they try out tender souls with for discipline—was marked first section.

"I can teach that," she said, pointing to the card, "if you'll let me—and"—her voice was wistful—"the little children like me. I adore them, and I think I could teach them to do sums."

The kindly principal looked at the

brimming eyes; a lump was in her throat as she accepted the offered services, calculating that she could afford a small salary from her personal account. And a softened glance followed the slender, dancing figure down the hall.

"It is worth paying a little for daily sunshine," she said to the teacher of higher mathematics, a sallow, severe, flat-looking woman, who sourly questioned the wisdom of the decision.

Already a laugh drifted back from where the primary children were buzzing about the little Mistress of Math.—as they then and there christened her—like honey bees about a flower. The stiff knot of hair untwisted of itself, and much hugging spread the crinkly waves of pale gold in a mist about the dimpled face. She tried to look severe, but caught up the littlest child.

"Oh, you darling!" she cried. "I'm going to stay and teach you sums until you grow up."

Then she tore upstairs and ripped the real Valenciennes off the fluffy graduating gown. There must be some sop to misfortune, some sacrifice to the dignity of her new position, and she liked the lace best. Misfortune! The senior teacher of mathematics had tried to drive the enormity of the calamity into her head, and had sighed acidly when a laugh rippled at the word. Alice—her name was Alice, soft and cuddly like herself—was glad to stay where she loved everybody, where everybody loved her. Why not?

She buried her tip-tilted nose in a ponderous volume, a piece of taffy, given her by the littlest girl, in a sticky paper at her side.

"I should like you to take the girls up the Claremont Road for the afternoon walk," the principal said, opening the door. "There are no people there. Miss Prim is indisposed, and everyone else is busy. As the climb is rather hard, you may allow them to rest for a time under the large oak near the top of the grade; you can teach them about birds—you really know a great deal about birds—and you can make the rest instructive."

"I'd love to go." She jumped up and went for her broad-brimmed hat.

And they set forth, for all the world like the animals marching into the Ark, two by two—they always do on educational walks. The littlest girl clung to her hand; an older girl put an arm about her waist as they turned from the town.

"Mistress Math."—sometimes it was shortened to that—"it's very hot," one said.

"If you'll think of the shade under the big oak at the top of the hill you'll forget it's hot." She laughed.

The dust of the road was dappled by drops of rain fallen the night before—a fine, freshening shower, that had washed the fuzzy thimbleberry leaves clean and brimmed the white cups of the blossoms with crystal wine. Millions of orange-flamed poppies scattered in golden largesse down the hills; it was as if all the gold of heaven had been poured on slope and upland. The little Mistress of Math. tried to drum the glory of the day into the hearts of the stragglers, but they limped along in overtight low shoes with uninterested eyes.

The oak reached, they scattered under the shade like a covey of young quail. Alice leaned against the trunk of the tree, the bared roots making her a chair throned above the others. By leaning forward she could see, down the sharp incline, the creek where a slow trickle of water washed the feet of laurel trees—the California kind, with pointed, burnished leaves and strong, spicy smell of bay. The first triliums dipped cool, wide leaves crowned by pink flowers in the water, and ferns,

maidenhair and swaying Woodwardias elbowed all sorts of green things the botany teacher surely would have known the name of; but all that Alice knew about them was that they were beryl and jade, malachite and wan sea-green.

"Did you ever see it so springy?" Alice asked of the girl next her, who listlessly inquired in return, yawning: "Isn't it time to go back?"

"Did you ever!" Alice held her breath in amazement. "Girls, look!" The covey huddled nearer and peeped with her over the edge of the hill. "Doesn't it look like a huge poppy blown off the bank?"

Down among the laurel an orange-plastered house—Mission style—hid low.

"Let's go down the path," Alice said, gathering her covey. "I don't believe Miss Stone would care; she said no one lived about here. We'll go and see what it is."

They picked up their skirts and went through the damp, lush grass down the slope to a rustic bridge built of bark-covered oak boughs.

"Doesn't it feel like an adventure, like opening the door of a dream?" Alice said. "Look, girls, it's a fairy palace! I'm sure no one could live in such a delicious place. Let's go a little nearer."

Cautioning them to be quiet, she led them silently across the bridge under the sun-dappled laurels that smelled so good, and they stood in front of a house with jutting tiled roof and broad steps of stone wedged between two masses of rock out of which oak trees—baby oaks—were growing greenly. It was the time of the year for the tender shimmer of the new leaves, and— The covey scuttled back.

A man with arm leaned on his brown corduroyed, knickerbockered knee, his head deep in his hand, looked up at the frightened twitters and flutter of gowns and frowned straight into Alice's laughing eyes. He seemed anything but amiable at the intrusion, and frowned again indignantly, then went in and slammed the door.

Alice laughed outright; it wasn't just what a mistress of math. should have done, but she did it. And the covey echoed it, and the green hills flung back the merry clamor.

The poet could not have been very angry, though he had been groping for a lost word and was just about to find it, for he came back with a brown corduroy coat on—he had been coatless before—and a brown tie at his throat, and made a courtly bow that showed the golden-brown sun touch on top of his hair. His dress and manner were of the orthodox kind—the poet through and through. And all at once Alice somehow felt that the world had changed from cold green to ripe, joyous, warm-hearted brown.

"Can I do anything for you?" he asked, looking down the row of interested faces lined before him.

Alice cleared her throat.

"Won't you come in?" He threw the door open.

"Oh, no, we couldn't," Alice gasped. "I'm sorry we've intruded. We must go. I thought—" She turned the covey bridgeward.

"Can't I have a drink of water? I'm so thirsty I could drink the creek," the littlest girl complained.

"Please, don't—there might be germs, you know." The poet smiled. "Allow me." And he went in and brought back a tray set with the loveliest Venetian glasses and a pitcher of pure well water.

The girls flocked about the steps, stretching out hands for the lovely glasses.

Alice, dismayed, said: "I'm sure we shouldn't—I'm quite sure. What will Miss Stone say? I thought—"

Distress clouded her eyes; she was quite distracted, struggling to keep back mortified tears, but the littlest girl was drinking gratefully and slowly, as she had been taught, blissfully as if the poet had handed her mead.

"And you?" The poet stood—after the others were served—with a full glass in his hands, his brown eyes looking amusedly into the troubled blue ones.

"I'm the Mistress of Math.," stumbly she explained, drawing herself erect. "You know I couldn't. Miss Stone—I thought no one lived here."

"I'm so glad to know what you thought at last. I know Miss Stone. I am sure she wouldn't mind the"—his tongue tripped—"the Mistress of Math. having a drink of water on the first very warm day of spring. I shall go down and explain. Miss Stone and I've been friends since—oh, since long ago."

Alice looked at him, puzzled. "I think you must be Mr. Ivan Strane—who isn't good for very much." She clapped her hand to her mouth; she had unconsciously repeated the title she had heard given him.

"I am Ivan Strane," he said, "and own to the description. Present my compliments to Miss Stone, and tell her I'm good enough to be cupbearer for searchers of knowledge, and that I think they have a very proper chaperon in the Mistress of Math."

Alice flushed hotly; she hated his mocking tone. His eyes were perfectly serious, yet his manner—she was sure he was poking fun at her, not at all appreciating the dignity of her position.

"I will deliver your message," she remarked stiffly, and turned her brood—who were curiously trying to glimpse the room through the half-opened door—toward the bridge. Such a tantalizing, delightful, hodge-podge of a room! Even Alice, clothed in all her new authority, couldn't help stealing a glance into the rose-and-green interior, fitted as a poet's room should be with rugs of rare weaves, mellowed bindings of books, fine moods of nature caught and framed, brasses and— She could see no more, and proceeded to shoo her flock over the bridge.

"I wish you'd stay just as you are for a minute," the poet called irritably in a voice not to be denied. He pulled a notebook from the brown corduroy pocket. "You spoiled a triumphal procession of spring by your coming. I was in the midst of it; it was working out nicely—the old idea in the new setting. I could see them com-

ing down the swelling green breast of the hills, slim sun-kissed youths and wind-blown maidens, purple-buskined, narcissus-wreathed, with flying locks and filleted brows, stain of crushed poppy, dew of lush grass shining on bare ankles—youth and the young world—

"Doesn't that sound like our Latin translation!" one girl whispered.

"You owe it to me to bring back my lost thought," he insisted.

"No, no; I'm sorry, but we have to go," Alice said.

"What a very strange young man!" Alice thought, and went hurriedly up the hill without looking back.

But Ivan Strane stood with hand shading his eyes, watching them straggle up the hill and troop down the rain-dappled road, and then went in and wrote madly. The Vestal maiden leading his procession was no longer slim and tall, with smooth-banded hair, but dainty and small—noticeably her eyes were blue. He wrote well into dusk and, lighting many candles, worked on into the night. He had seen youth greet spring that day, and words flowed.

The next day he went to see Miss Stone and explained that the fault was his if any rule breaking there had been, and that the little Mistress of Math. was quite free from blame.

Miss Stone scolded a bit, gave him a cup of tea, had him read her a lyric or two and called to someone passing the door to come in.

The little Mistress of Math. was properly introduced and also had a cup of tea and a lyric or two, and in a call—true, a very lengthy call—they were friends, for both were young. If one dived in figures and problems, the other soared in strophe and sonnet—they made a fair balance. And it was spring! Miss Stone wisely was glad, for John Strane—Ivanized for poetry's sake—was the son of a fine mother, her dearest friend, and he needed the ballast of mathematics to pin him to earth, and the little Mistress was apt to be too content, too practical, to fly.

"Mind you," Miss Stone said to Alice

when the poet left, "you mustn't take the girls up the hill road again. Already they are telephoning to the florist for narcissus to make wreaths, and are wearing gymnasium sandals. And the run on Theocritus in the library is amusing. Two volumes have lost their backs. Jack Strane used to be a sensible lad, and I've little doubt will be a sensible man when he's through with the poet infection." Her gray eyes twinkled. "His poetry is just good enough to take him seriously—little lyrics with the singing quality; fortunately, not good enough to make him unfitted for the world."

The Greek fad faded when basketball practice began, and the suddenly crowded Greek class showed a decided lessening of numbers. But Miss Stone and Alice had tea at the poppy house many times, and enjoyed its curios and pleasant blendings of colors and rhythm of good taste. Miss Stone called the poet Jack—Alice wished she wouldn't; somehow it gave the poetic atmosphere a jar, but he didn't seem to mind and answered to it as well as to Ivan. He clipped his hair shorter and sometimes wore conventional collars and conventional clothes, though Alice secretly liked him best in the brown corduroys.

A leisurely summer was spent in occasional visits, and pleasantly the fall drifted by with many meetings. By winter, the drama was forming in his brain—the one that was to make him famous in after years—and he must have someone to whom to read the fast-gathering lines. Alice was a patient, pleased listener, and her practical mind proved a restraining curb on his too daring flights. Miss Stone encouraged the friendship; she loved the girl as her own, and the poet was a clean, companionable lad with lofty ideals. Miss Stone spent some of the time with them in the little library, her special room, where she had given him the privilege of old friendship to drop in one evening a week, and where Ivan was teaching Greek to Alice, that they might read Theocritus together in his own tongue, which everyone knows

is much better than using even Mr. Lang's clever translation.

So the friendship budded, grew slowly and flowered. Then came the expected, and little Mistress Math. consented to share Ivan Strane's home and heart with his verse, not one bit jealous of the verse, since she herself stipulated that it was to be first. "That is what you were born for," she said, looking up at him wide-eyed. "I'm only an incident to help along."

Miss Stone, though never having borne the mother name, had a mother heart, and she planned for Alice, making her bring out the stored Valenciennes, hidden during misfortune—"which turned out my best fortune, after all," Alice shyly said. And the wedding gown was fashioned, the others, not so interesting, builded and the books of mathematics tucked on the high shelf of an old dusty closet, from which the senior teacher, much offended, rescued them.

"For sums may be found more consoling than matrimony," she said maliciously. Life was very sour to the senior teacher; she, poor thing, had tasted so little of its sweets. She had been a baby of angles and had grown up on geometrical lines, useful but not graceful.

The wedding was at the church, and the supper Miss Stone gave at the school—the little Mistress would have it so—with all the girls present, even the littlest. The narcissus bouquet was big enough; Alice insisted upon this, that each girl might at least have one blossom to insure good fortune.

The wedding trip was to the poppy house, where Ivan said they could be to themselves and find out each other and live the life beautiful. Alice always put that adjective before the substantive; Ivan was particular to put it after; it meant more, he said.

He wished them to live absolutely alone—Alice was sure she wouldn't mind the work—and have nothing to jar upon the thought beautiful. No telephone, no electric lights, nothing hideously modern, nor distasteful. He

would fetch water in a Greek *amphora* from the well. Too, he would like that Alice should don Greek dress, but she was firm as to that, for her level little head recognized that tip-tilted noses and crinkly hair did not go with *chitons*, and she loved her wedding finery, *Directoire* as it was.

What a lot of time it took to make Venetian glass sparkle! What a lot of dust Greek carving caught! Alice was suds to her elbows, and there was no more water for the scrubbing; the *amphora* was at the well and Ivan was bent over the typewriter in the study—an invention he deplored, but publishers wouldn't read his poetry otherwise—copying verse. It was a heavy jug for small, plump hands to carry so many times back and forth from the well.

The house was heavenly in the sunshiny day, but at night laurels made darker, creepier shadows than any other trees, and had a way of whispering hoarsely of ghoulish things when the wind blew. Then the wish crept nearer each night for light and stirring of people about them. Ivan was deep in his dream; it was tremendous, and she loved each evening's reading of what he had written in the day. She couldn't quite understand it all, but it was to Ivan's voice she was listening.

Then winter shut out the short day hours with a drop of her dark curtain. At night the laurels were black, greedily drinking in all the light from the small leaded panes, and the scraping of boughs over the tiled roof when the north wind blew down the canyon would not let her sleep. Her eyes grew large and round, and she was always listening—it was so quiet—listening when she should be sleeping. The call of the lonesome night owl came out of the silent dark, with the sullen flow of the creek water. When the fog swirled down it seemed to her that she and Ivan were shrouded in a deathly pall, through which the only sounds that stole in were muttering and threatening. If she only had a telephone she could call up Miss Stone and the girls at school, and feel that

she was living. But Ivan said telephones were jarring, out of harmony.

As winter wore on, Alice fell out of step with the rhythm. Ivan was so silent, so much alone with the drama, that she took to working out problems in algebra at night across the table from him, x always representing Ivan, the unknown quantity; the problem never seemed to work out. She wasn't unhappy exactly, just restless, and she meant to find out why. She would not disturb Ivan with her fancies, but doubt ate into her heart. If only they could have everyday things about them, like other people! The life beautiful, the life simple, was fine in theory, but— There she always stopped and sighed; sighing is a bad habit when the heart is young.

One day she spoke: "I know the Greeks would have loved electric lights and telephones and running hot water to wash their dishes with."

He was shocked.

"Our life is on such a high plane," he said, grieved, "so beautiful."

"But I am sure the Greeks had dirty dishes," she persisted, "and would have liked to do them easy."

He was tangled in the drama and did not answer; the music of words was singing, and he talked about the sense of proportion in their life, how perfectly symmetrical it was. She read it differently. Ivan was a dear—but there were always the dishes three times a day, and she set to thinking. Economy was most necessary until the drama should be finished, she knew, but there could be economy with comfort. Through it all, even when sometimes she would nod over the long lines of the drama, she never allowed herself to feel sorry that she had looked down the slope of the hill that day and spied the poppy house. If—if— Oh, that creeping serpent that tempted and poisoned!

One day, a cloudy, threatening day, Ivan was called to town. No sunshine was in the poppy house; no sunshine brightened the mellow rooms, and Alice lay huddled, a crumpled little heap, on the big couch, the best rose

cushion watered with tears. She couldn't bear it a minute longer. She wouldn't go to the well for water; she wouldn't wash the dishes; she wouldn't— She sat up suddenly. "I'll do it!" she said to the big cushion.

Looking back, the house gloomed dully in the dark green setting of trees, and her heart beat lighter when she reached the road. She was glad to be away from it. Strange how hateful it seemed that day! For the first time she longed for the big bare schoolrooms and her little attic room. Life was there, noise and the everyday world, everyday things—just common, plain atmosphere. She had been drugged with the wine of Olympus. Oh, for a draught of the commonplace! Then she almost broke the compact she had made with herself. "What if I had walked the other way that long time ago!" kept repeating itself through her mind. Tears blinded her eyes. Drops of rain began to fall. She stumbled on, over tufts of grass and stones, around the hill, pitying herself—a dangerous person to pity.

"Why, Alice," Miss Stone exclaimed, "where's Jack?"

"Gone to town," she answered. "Oh, Miss Stone, Miss Stone!"

Miss Stone hastily took her up to her room, and the girl flung herself on the wide, comfortable bed and sobbed. Miss Stone let her have her cry out without a word.

"Now, Alice, tell me, what is the matter? Your clothes are wet—I suppose you didn't bring an umbrella—and my pillow is soaked through with tears."

"I haven't any umbrella—the Greeks didn't carry umbrellas," Alice said scornfully, lifting her head and viewing the pillow.

"Oh, it's the Greeks, is it? I thought it might be the drama. One's dead and the other's alive, I'm glad it's the dead one."

"But, Miss Stone, it isn't funny. I can't—just can't—"

"Hush, my dear." Miss Stone's voice was stern. Alice read no sym-

pathy in her searching eyes. "I've never been married, Alice, but I know a wife must never find fault with her husband to another woman—even her own mother."

"It isn't Ivan at all, Miss Stone; it's—the blessed things that I can't have—because they're commonplace—that's killing me. I love it here; it's so comfortably ugly." She snuggled down, patting the new art eiderdown quilt. "I love that telephone on the wall. I don't care if it doesn't harmonize."

Miss Stone nodded. "I see." A smile of relief flitted over her face. "Alice, Alice, you're hankering for the commonplace—well?"

"Miss Stone, I've come to ask you if I mightn't have the primary math. again."

"And let the senior teacher think that sums are better than matrimony and algebra better than Jack?"

Alice buried her face in her hands. The rain was coming down in solid slant. How cheery it was here with the telephone ringing, the faint tinkle of pianos, the hum of voices through the door! From down the hall came a catch of song—yes, this was life—and there, the southeast wind was a fiend tearing at the vitals of the house. How the branches rasped! She put her hands to her ears involuntarily to still the grating on her nerves. The voices of the winds, how she dreaded them! And the sullen rage of the creek when the rain swelled it bank high! She looked about her. Miss Stone sat thoughtful and still. Alice closed her eyes. There and here! There Ivan was alone, hearing all that she dreaded; alone—no one to listen to the new act of the drama—no one to mind the fire. She could feel the cold of the fireless room, hear the click of the typewriter. She had pinned a few words on the written page in the machine near the last finished line. That he would surely see; it was on the line where a big tear had splashed and she had smudged the words, trying to rub it away.

She wondered, watching the firelight on the wall, if Ivan would care very much. Here was life, she kept saying to herself. Here was what she could not live without, what she must have, what she had flung away. The children loved her; Miss Stone loved her, for all the queer aloofness that held her now; they would be glad to have her back; it would be blessed to wipe it all away and begin again. Then—Ivan loved her—Ivan was alone. This criss-cross of thought confused her. A gust shook the school building; the windows rattled in the frames. She raised her head and listened. Ivan was alone; it was a cruel night—and what awful things the laurels were saying—

She started wildly to her feet.

"Miss Stone, Miss Stone, I'm going home this very minute!"

The bell rang and Miss Stone went to the hall and looking over the stairs saw a man with dragged wet clothing enter. She did not wait, but went down before the maid brought the card to her.

"It's a stormy night for a call, Jack," she said cheerfully, ushering him into the little library, where tea used to be served and lyrics read. "It's too bad the Greeks didn't carry umbrellas," she added meaningly.

There was no laugh in his haggard eyes. "Alice?" he demanded.

"Is here, upstairs, crying her eyes out to go home."

He fell back in relief and drew a sharp breath.

"I suppose I'm ridiculously nervous. Excuse me, Miss Stone. Of course, I knew Alice was with you—of course. May I go up now? I was afraid—"

"I'll send Alice to you, Jack." And she laid her hand on his head as she passed.

Through the storm and rain, unheeding all advice and protestation; they climbed the hill road, struggling against the beating wind. Alice's skirts slanted wetly about her feet; strands of damp hair whipped across her eyes; rain dripped from the brim of Ivan's hat, but neither of them felt

the downpour. They walked to the bridge, hand in hand, silent; for it was a great moment they had safely passed. There is none larger in any life than when love hangs balanced on a thread—and it holds.

Each took the blame, and each loved the other the dearer for doing so.

"Oh, but it's good to be home!" Alice exclaimed as she caught a glint of light through the dark laurels. The wind drove a little heap of whirling leaves across the threshold into the room. "Even the smell of damp leaves is good," she said, drawing a full breath.

Across the polished floor a trickle of rain dribbled from her clothing, but she threw herself on the couch and plumped up the big cushion where the dent of her head still was. "It's home—home—home," she whispered, stroking the rose-colored stuff.

She stood and looked about the room as if she had been long gone and wished to drink her fill of old remembered things. Then she knelt to build a fire—unmindful of the wet gown that made a widening pool on the hearth—and to hide the color that burned redly in her face, the mist that came to her eyes. She had been near to losing it all—Ivan must never know how near. She could have knelt and kissed the bricks at having them back; but she only took down the bellows and puffed back the fine ashes that strewed the hearth.

"You must change your things, Alice," he said.

"Wait—just a moment—I can't just now. Oh, it's home, home, Ivan

—home." She looked up into his face.

"I shall kindle the fire," he said, and fetched the drama humbly. "I shall kindle it with this." He put a match to the typewritten pages. She caught the started blaze in her hands and crushed it out.

"You didn't think it was because of this, Ivan? I should have died if you had burned it."

He took her blistered hands in his and kissed them.

"What blind children we've been, Alice! The lute of our happiness was almost unstrung. Suppose—suppose it had never sung again to our touch?"

They sat at their own fireside and talked, and they did not talk of epics nor lyrics nor anything of verse. It had come to him, walking down the hill, that perhaps thinking the simple life was better than living it. And he planned largely as he had forgiven largely.

The little past-Mistress of Math. crept closer to him; her bandaged hands kept his. The gleam of the fire glinted in her pale hair; the glow of the flames was warm in her eyes; her parted lips were ripe as the blaze.

"It is love and trust between us, Ivan," she said. "I've learned a great lesson in so short a time. I'm so ashamed I ran away, for I did run away from my duty, my home, and—oh, Ivan, will you let everything be as it was? Will you forgive me? Will you keep me?" she asked simply.

"Little Mistress Math.," he spoke with a choke in his voice, "there are good times coming for you and me. We have found the chrism of life."



THE man who buys clothes for his wife is a joy. The woman who buys her husband's suits is a joke.

A SAINT is a man who believes this world is hell and makes it such for others.

THE LOVE OF WOMEN

By FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER

CHARACTERS

PETER PETROVITCH (*a miser*)
ANNA PETROVITCH (*his wife*)
IVAN BRALOFF (*her lover*)
SERGIUS MAKAROFF (*a captain in the Russian army*)
ORLOFF (*a soldier*)
LASKA (*a second soldier*)

SCENE: A small village in Southwestern Russia, near the borders of Poland.

TIME: The reign of the Empress Katherine.

SCENE—The living room in the house of PETER PETROVITCH, an old man and a miser. The room is paved with stone. The walls are of rough-hewn logs. The unglazed windows are closed with heavy shutters, fastened with wooden bars. At the rear in the center is a huge stone fireplace, in which a log fire is burning. To the right of the fireplace is a heavy wooden door leading without, which is closed and barred. To the extreme right against the wall stands a heavy wooden chest. Upon the stone floor are skins of bears and wolves. In the center of the room is a rough table, with a small lamp burning upon it. To the left of the table is a large, rough wooden chair. On the wall to the left hangs an ikon. Through a doorway to the left of the fireplace is seen a bedroom, with the bed dimly illuminated by a candle burning on a small table. A large, rough wooden settle stands to the left of the fireplace. Upon a peg on the wall to the left hangs a heavy hooded fur cloak.

(As the curtain rises ANNA enters the room from the bedroom. She is a young and beautiful woman. Her heavy black hair is loosely gathered in a knot at the back. She wears a long white robe, trimmed with white fox fur. It fits her figure closely. Upon her feet are small sandals made of deerskin. She enters the room from the bedroom and walks to the center of the stage. Her hands are clenched at her sides; her expression is tense and drawn.)

ANNA (*turning and looking toward the bedroom*)

God! Will he never go?

PETROVITCH (*entering from the bedroom. He is an old man, with a long gray beard, wearing a heavy fur-lined cloak of dark-green cloth and a cap of*

black astrakan fur. He carries a whip. His face wears an expression of malignant cunning

I am ready.

ANNA

You go to Polsk?

THE SMART SET

PETROVITCH

To Polsk. Old Navarovski is dying. He owes me eighty rubles—you see, therefore, that I must go. I shall come back tomorrow. (*Turns suddenly and observes her.*) Why are you so nervous?

ANNA

Nervous? I am not nervous. Why should you think that I am nervous?

PETROVITCH

Your face—your voice—your clenched hands. Are you afraid?

ANNA

Afraid—of what?

PETROVITCH

Are you not alone? Do you forget the money? (*Points to chest.*) Bolt the door carefully.

ANNA

With you it is nothing but money—always money—money. Rightly do they call you the Miser of Kovnitza. You love it as other men their children. PETROVITCH (*approaching the chest and attempting to raise the lid*)

Why not? It is the child of my labors. (*Turns to her.*) It is locked. The key is here. (*Taps his belt.*) Take care—admit no one.

ANNA (*suspiciously*)

Why should I admit anyone?

PETROVITCH

I have heard strange talk in the village. Ivan Braloff—

ANNA (*in alarm*)

What of Ivan Braloff?

PETROVITCH (*approaching her and speaking sternly*)

They say he is your lover. I laughed at them. Be glad that I am content to laugh. (*He shakes the whip threateningly.*)

ANNA (*looking at him searchingly*)

You laughed?

PETROVITCH

Was I not right to laugh? Take care, lest I laugh no more. You are mine—mine. Let this dog of a Braloff beware. If I hear such things again I will have him flogged all the way to Polsk. (*Raises the whip threateningly.*) And as for you—

ANNA (*facing him proudly and without fear*)

And as for me?

PETROVITCH (*staring at her, then dropping the whip to the floor*)

Anna—Anna—you are my wife. We must not quarrel. These things are lies. I love you— (*Holds out his hands to her.*)

ANNA (*scornfully*)

You! What do you know of love? Your heart is in that chest.

PETROVITCH

Not so. I did not believe their lies. You are a good woman. Forgive me. (*Picks up the whip.*) Now I must go—it is growing late.

ANNA (*coldly*)

Good-bye. I will guard your money safely.

PETROVITCH

And my honor?

ANNA

That you must guard for yourself—as every man.

PETROVITCH

You are right. (*Starts for the door.*) Good-bye.

ANNA

Good-bye.

PETROVITCH (*as he goes out*)

Do not forget to bolt the door carefully. Ah—it is cold! Again good-bye. (*Exit.*)

(ANNA closes and bolts the door, then comes to the center of the room and stands listening intently. PETROVITCH's steps die away. There are heard sounds of sleigh bells, which become fainter and fainter. Presently there is a noise without, as of someone walking in the snow.)

ANNA (*clasping her robe to her breast*)

At last! (*She approaches the door. The sounds are repeated. She reaches the door and speaks softly through the crack.*) Ivan—Ivan—is it you? (*Sounds without of distant howling of wolves, then silence. She draws back, shuddering.*) Ah—the wolves—always the wolves. (*She walks wearily to the settle, and sinking upon it gazes at the fire. From time to time she glances nervously toward the door. A soft knocking is heard. She starts up suddenly and approaches the door.*) Ivan—Ivan! (*The knocking is repeated, louder. She opens the door.*) Ivan—my beloved!

(Enter IVAN BRALOFF, a young and handsome man, about thirty, with dark hair and mustache and a swarthy complexion. His long Russian boots are covered with snow. He wears a close-fitting brown tunic, trimmed with black fur, over which is a long cloak of wolf-skin. Upon his head is a Polish cap of white fur. He carries a long hunting knife in his belt.)

IVAN (taking her in his arms and kissing her passionately)

Ah—Anna—Anna—my beloved! At last—at last!

(The door swings to. They do not notice it nor fasten it.)

ANNA

Ivan, dearest, why were you so long?

IVAN

The old fox has but now gone. I waited with my love burning in my eyes, my lips, my hands, that I might see you—kiss you—hold you to my heart. (Clasps her passionately to him.) I love you—I love you—I love you—

ANNA

Ah—my dearest—my Ivan!

IVAN (again embracing her)

My beloved! Why do you tremble so?

ANNA

I do not know. It is cold.

IVAN

You cannot be cold, with my arms about you.

ANNA

It is my heart that is cold. I am afraid—I do not know why.

IVAN

Come to the fire. (They sit upon the settle before the fire, she upon his left. IVAN puts his arms about her and holds her closely to him.) Will you always love me, Anna—always? Will you give up everything in the world for me? Will you forsake your husband—your people—your home, for love of me? I want you. I cannot live without you—you know it. Will you sacrifice all you have for me?

ANNA (looking up at him)

I love you with all my heart and soul and body. Hold me closer, Ivan—so—that our hearts may beat together as one great heart.

IVAN (embracing and kissing her)
My beloved!

ANNA

I shall love you always—now—and after—when the gray darkness comes—

IVAN (interrupting her)

God, do not say such things! When you die—I shall die also. There is no sacrifice I would not make—for you. Death itself I do not fear, now that I have you.

ANNA

Ah, Ivan, do you really love me so much? It is wonderful—wonderful. I did not believe that men loved so.

IVAN

I love you so much that I would give the sight of my eyes to guide you—the blood in my veins to warm you—the breath of my body to give you life. I swear it.

ANNA

For that I will give you all that a woman can give a man. (Rises.)

IVAN (rising and with his arm about her walking toward the center of the stage)

My beloved—you tremble still!

ANNA

It is cold—cold! Put your arms closer about me. (She star's violently from him.) What was that?

IVAN

I did not hear anything. Do not be afraid.

ANNA (listening intently)

Listen! It is someone walking on the snow!

IVAN

Perhaps it is a fox. I do not hear anything.

ANNA (returning to him)

Ah! it is gone. It must have been the wind, Ivan.

IVAN

Yes, it was the wind. (Kisses her.)

ANNA

I do not feel afraid now. You are so brave, my Ivan.

IVAN

Why should I not be? You love me. Knowing that, I fear nothing in life or death—

ANNA (starting again)

Ivan—listen—what was that?

IVAN (*irritably*)

Do not be so foolish. It is nothing—I am not afraid. The old man has gone away. I saw him in the *drojki*.

ANNA

Yes, he has gone—a long way. Did you bar the door, Ivan?

IVAN

No. Why are you so frightened? He has gone away. Come—

ANNA (*starting violently as the noise of the door rattling is heard*)

That noise—do you not hear, Ivan? I tell you it is someone at the door.

IVAN

It is nothing but the wind. Do not be so foolish. Come. (*Takes her by the arm.*)

ANNA

Ivan—quick—you must bar the door! (*Someone is heard without walking softly in the snow.*) There—do you hear? It is someone! You must bar the door—quick, Ivan!

IVAN (*approaching the door, drawing his knife from his belt*)

Do not be afraid. They shall not harm you.

ANNA (*following him, taking him by the arm and gazing terrified at the knife*)

Ivan—what would you do? Take care!

IVAN (*shaking her off irritably*)

Hush! I shall bar the door. (*Continues toward the door.*)

ANNA

Ivan, be careful, someone is there! (*The door rattles; she cries out.*) Ah!

IVAN (*turning*)

Be quiet!

(*Before IVAN reaches the door it is pushed quickly open and PETROVITCH enters. He does not at first observe IVAN, who is standing in the shadow of the door.*)

PETROVITCH

Anna, I turned back—

ANNA (*wringing her hands*)

Peter! Ah, God!

PETROVITCH

The horse was lame. I turned back— (*Observes her agitation.*) Anna! What is the matter?

ANNA

Peter! Ah, Christ have mercy!

PETROVITCH (*seeing IVAN, as he closes the door*)

Who is there? (*Points to IVAN.*)

IVAN (*stepping forward, with uplifted knife*)

It is I, old man—

ANNA (*rushing forward*)

No, no, Ivan!

PETROVITCH

Braloff—here! (*Looks at ANNA.*) Ah—you traitress! (*Takes a knife from under his cloak.*)

ANNA

Peter! Ivan!

IVAN (*to ANNA*)

Back!

PETROVITCH (*rushing at Ivan with his knife*)

Dog!

IVAN

Fool! (*Strikes down his knife and stabs him.*)

PETROVITCH (*sinking to the floor*)

Ah—God!

ANNA (*horror-stricken*)

Ivan!

IVAN (*wiping his knife on his cloak*)

The old fox will creep no more.

ANNA (*wringing her hands. Her hair has fallen down*)

Ah—God—God!

IVAN (*throwing down the knife and embracing her*)

My beloved! You are mine now—mine—mine!

ANNA (*shuddering and repulsing him*)

What have you done—what have you done?

IVAN (*glancing carelessly at PETROVITCH*)

He is dead.

ANNA (*wildly*)

Dead—dead!

IVAN (*again embracing her*)

My beloved, do not be afraid—I love you.

ANNA (*starting back as he takes her hand*)

Oh! Your hand is cold—it is wet—wet with blood!

IVAN (*angrily*)

Be quiet. What is his blood to you?

ANNA (*recoiling and looking in terror at the body of PETROVITCH*)

I cannot stay here—with—

IVAN (*interrupting her*)
 With me?
 ANNA
 I cannot stay here. We must go.
 IVAN
 Go—where?
 ANNA
 Anywhere—away—I do not care!
 IVAN
 Very well. We will go in the *drojki*.
 Where is the money?
 ANNA
 The money!
 IVAN (*impatiently*)
 Yes, yes—the money. We cannot
 go without the money.
 ANNA (*coldly*)
 It is in the chest.
 IVAN (*going to the chest and trying to
 open it*)
 It is locked. Have you the key?
 ANNA
 No.
 IVAN
 Then he has. (*Goes to the body of
 PETROVITCH, takes the keys from his
 belt and opens the chest. ANNA mean-
 while turns to the ikon and prays.*)
 ANNA
 Christ—have mercy—have mercy!
 IVAN (*rising from the chest with a
 leather bag of money in his hand*)
 Here it is. Now let us go. Come.
 (*He starts toward the door.*)
 ANNA (*turning and hesitating, as she
 glances at the body of PETROVITCH
 which lies between her and the door*)
 Ivan, Ivan! I cannot pass that—
 IVAN (*laughing roughly*)
 That! He cannot hurt you now.
 Your warmest cloak—quick—it is cold.
 ANNA
 Yes, it is cold—cold. (*She shud-
 ders.*) I cannot pass—
 IVAN (*harshly*)
 All women are cowards. Come, I
 will carry you. (*He advances toward
 her, stuffing the bag of money in his belt.*)
 ANNA (*mechanically taking a heavy
 cloak from a peg in the wall and throw-
 ing it about her*)
 Yes, all women are cowards. (*She
 advances toward him, but as she ap-
 proaches the body of PETROVITCH she
 starts back with a cry.*) Oh!

IVAN (*angrily*)
 What is the matter now?
 ANNA (*gazing down at the floor in horror*)
 On the floor! It is cold—it touched
 my foot!
 IVAN
 Come; it is nothing but blood.
 ANNA
 Ah, God! His blood!
 IVAN (*impatiently, coming up to her*)
 Are you ready?
 ANNA
 Yes, yes, but I cannot pass—
 IVAN (*roughly, taking her in his arms*)
 Come—put your arms about my
 neck.
 ANNA
 Ah, God! Ivan!
 IVAN
 My beloved—
 (*He begins to carry her toward the
 door. She averts her head. There is a
 loud knocking at the door. IVAN stands
 in alarm, then retreats a few steps.
 ANNA slips from his arms and retreats
 to the left of the stage.*)
 IVAN (*softly*)
 Be quiet!
 (*The knocking is repeated, more
 loudly.*)
 VOICE WITHOUT
 Open, in the name of the Empress.
 IVAN (*springing to the door and attempt-
 ing to bar it*)
 What do you want?
 VOICE WITHOUT
 Open.
 (*The door is thrown violently open.*
*Enter SERGIUS MAKAROFF, with two
 rough-looking soldiers carrying muskets.*
*MAKAROFF is dressed in a gray uniform,
 laced with gold, over which is a short
 fur-lined cloak. He is a handsome man,
 with light hair and mustache. He wears
 a hussar's fur cap with a gold cockade,
 and has on riding boots. He carries a
 cavalry sword.)*
 MAKAROFF (*entering*)
 Quarters for the night— (*He starts
 back, as he nearly falls over the body of
 PETROVITCH.*) My God! What is this?
 ANNA (*dully*)
 Christ have mercy! Christ have
 mercy!

IVAN (*retreating to the left of the stage and turning fiercely on her*)

Say nothing.

MAKAROFF (*gazing at them as he approaches the center of the stage*)

Ah!

ORLOFF (*leaning over and looking at the face of PETROVITCH*)

It is old Petrovitch, the miser.

(ORLOFF and LASKA move the body of PETROVITCH away from the door.)

MAKAROFF (*turning on him*)

You are from the village?

ORLOFF

From Polsk. I come here to the market.

MAKAROFF (*pointing to ANNA and IVAN*)

Who are these people?

ORLOFF

Anna, the young wife of Petrovitch, and Ivan Braloff, her lover.

MAKAROFF (*dismissing him with a wave of his hand, and walking to a large chair in the center of the room, near the table, where he seats himself*)

Enough.

ANNA (*running forward and kneeling before him*)

It was not Ivan—it was not Ivan!

IVAN (*fiercely, as he rushes forward and seizes her arm*)

Silence, fool!

MAKAROFF (*glancing at IVAN and smiling grimly*)

What have you to say, Ivan Braloff?

(IVAN makes no reply.)

ANNA (*rising and wringing her hands*)

Christ—have mercy!

MAKAROFF (*pointing to the knife on the floor and addressing IVAN*)

Is that knife yours?

ANNA (*picking up the knife*)

It is mine.

MAKAROFF (*laughing grimly*)

The love of women! The poor old fool could not buy it with all his gold (*Muses.*)—yet you fling it away—on that. (*Points to IVAN.*)

IVAN (*stepping forward*)

I did not—

MAKAROFF (*raising his hand*)

Hold—you are both guilty. The village is under military control. You

shall hang together. (*To ORLOFF*) Take them out.

ORLOFF (*approaching ANNA and seizing her arm*)

Come.

LASKA (*approaching IVAN and laying his hand on his shoulder*)

Come.

ANNA (*drawing herself up proudly*)

You cannot harm us—we die together.

MAKAROFF (*glancing admiringly at her*)

Girl, you are too beautiful to die.

(*To the soldiers*) Take that fellow outside and await my orders.

(*The two soldiers go out with IVAN.*)

ANNA (*starting after them and calling out*)

Let me go with him—Ivan!

MAKAROFF (*rising and stopping her*)

Stay!

ANNA (*retreating from him*)

What do you want with me?

MAKAROFF (*approaching her*)

You are too beautiful to die.

ANNA (*retreating*)

Let me go—I love him.

MAKAROFF

Live—I have money.

ANNA

Money! What do I want with money? Petrovitch bought me with his money. For four years I have lived with an old man. I do not want money.

MAKAROFF.

What do you want? Whatever it is, I can give it to you. When this war with Poland is over I shall be a colonel. I will take you to the city—to Kieff, to Moscow. You shall ride in a carriage. You shall have everything—money, love, happiness— (*Approaches her and attempts to take her hand.*)

ANNA (*repulsing him with her left hand; she still has the knife in her right, in the folds of her cloak*)

Go away. I want nothing—nothing but death.

MAKAROFF (*coming closer*)

You beautiful—tigress! Kiss me, and forget that—fool.

ANNA (*threatening him with the knife*)

Back! I hate you!

MAKAROFF (*retreating a little*)

Tigress indeed—with sharp claws!

(Again approaches her.) Give me that knife.

ANNA (striking at him with the knife) Back!

MAKAROFF (angrily, as he avoids her)

You devil! Death you shall have, since you wish it.

ANNA (proudly)

I love Ivan. I love him—do you hear?—I love him! I cannot live without him. I would rather go down to hell with him forever than have everything that you, or all the men in the world, could give me. Now let me die!

MAKAROFF

Hah! Now I know how to tame you. He shall die alone.

ANNA (placing the knife at her breast) Never!

MAKAROFF

God! The love of women—the love of women! What a sublime folly! Do you think the love of any man is worth—that? (Snaps his finger.)

ANNA

Yes. Fools like you cannot understand. He loves me.

MAKAROFF

You are the fool. He loves you no more than I.

ANNA

He loves me—I know it.

MAKAROFF

And you think he would die—for you?

ANNA

I know it. He has sworn it.

MAKAROFF (laughing loudly)

A million men have sworn it. I also—and am yet alive. Do you believe such oaths?

ANNA

His—yes; a thousand times yes!

MAKAROFF

Do you dare me to test him?

ANNA

Yes—yes—we die together. He will show you what it is to be a brave man.

MAKAROFF (smiling grimly)

So be it. (Pounds on the table with the hilt of his sword. Then calls.) Orloff! Laska!

ORLOFF (opening the door and entering) Captain! (Salutes.)

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MAKAROFF

Bring in the man.

ORLOFF

As you say, Barin. (Turns, passes out, and at once returns with LASKA, and IVAN between them.)

MAKAROFF

Ivan Braloff, I condemn you and this woman, your accomplice and mistress, to die for the murder of Petrovitch, the miser. You will be hanged immediately. Orloff, Laska, do your duty.

ANNA (running up to IVAN, placing her hand on his arm and gazing fondly at him)

Ivan; we die together! I am happy—happy!

(IVAN remains silent.)

MAKAROFF (to IVAN)

You say nothing. Are you not also happy?

IVAN

Is anyone happy—to die?

MAKAROFF (pointing to ANNA)

She is.

(IVAN remains silent.)

ANNA

Ivan, my love—

MAKAROFF

Ivan Braloff, do you wish to live?

IVAN

Who does not?

MAKAROFF

We need men. Tomorrow we cross the border into Poland. Will you fight for holy Russia?

IVAN (eagerly)

Gladly.

ANNA

Ivan! Ivan!

MAKAROFF (to ANNA)

Hold your peace. (To IVAN) We need every man. Tomorrow there will be a battle. You will be placed in the front rank. You will probably be killed. There is a chance; will you take it?

IVAN

Gladly. And the woman?

MAKAROFF (sternly)

The woman dies.

ANNA (with a terrible cry)

Ah! Ivan! Not alone?

MAKAROFF

Alone.

ANNA (*putting her hands to her head*)

Ah! God have mercy!

MAKAROFF (*with a sneer*)

The love of women—and the love of men!

ANNA

Ivan, Ivan! Speak to me—for God's sake speak to me! Ivan, you will not let me die alone! Ah, Ivan! (*She kneels before him.*)IVAN (*roughly*)

Woman, be quiet! Have I not killed a man—for you?

ANNA (*cowering on the floor*)

Ah, Christ! Alone! Alone!

IVAN

And besides, Anna, must I not fight for my country?

ANNA (*rising slowly and staggering back against the table*)

And I thought you loved me!

IVAN

I do; you know it.

MAKAROFF (*pointing to ANNA*)

Orloff, Laska, take her away.

ANNA (*drawing herself up proudly and throwing back her head*)

I am ready.

(*The two soldiers take positions on each side of her.*)

MAKAROFF

Are you satisfied?

ANNA

To die—yes. For what should I live?

MAKAROFF

You will not come to Moscow with me—now?

ANNA

Less now than before.

MAKAROFF (*with a gesture of impatience*)Then go. (*Points to the door. As ANNA and the soldiers pass IVAN, he turns toward her.*)

IVAN

Anna, my beloved, good-bye.

ANNA (*suddenly furious*)You—you coward! (*She turns toward him magnificently. Her cloak falls to the ground.*) For you I would have walked in hell through all eternity! (*She raises her arm, holding the knife.*) Had you died, and I been spared, I would have followed you—thus—(*She places the point of the knife over her heart.*) And you stand there and say to me, so quietly, "Good-bye, my beloved"—and live to hold some other woman in your arms! Thus would I have followed you—thus! Take this, and do likewise. (*She offers him the knife.*)IVAN (*refusing the knife*)

My country needs me—I cannot.

ANNA

Liar—and coward! Then I can! (*She raises the knife to strike him, then hesitates.*) Ivan! Ivan, my beloved! I cannot! (*She drops the knife on the floor and buries her face in her hands.*)

MAKAROFF

Hold—seize her!

ANNA (*composing herself, and waving aside the two soldiers*)I am ready—now. (*She walks proudly to the door.*)

CURTAIN.



YOU'LL find some people with lots of money ahead, but for some reason or other they never seem able to catch up with more than a few dollars of it.

A PAST is a sorry present for a woman to give her future husband.

THE TEMPLETONS' NIGHT OUT

By E. LAWRENCE DUDLEY

MRS. TEMPLETON, lifting the train of her opera cloak clear of the wet pavement, climbed up the brown stone steps and leaned against the balustrade with a tired sigh.

"I'm glad Tom gave you the key," she said. "It would have been a shame to make them sit up for us. It must be after two o'clock."

"It is—twenty minutes after," returned her husband, slipping off his gloves and thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets.

"Think how awful it would have been to go back to Dewhurst. We shouldn't have been home till daylight."

"We shouldn't have been home at all. The last train leaves at twelve." Mr. Templeton, unbuttoning his overcoat, began to grope in the pockets of his vest.

"Well, I mean if there *had* been a train." She looked up at the substantial brown face of the house before her. "Tom is certainly lucky. A house like this for the winter, a palace at Newport for the summer and—"

"It all came from his marrying a rich wife."

Mrs. Templeton scented a personal application in the remark and remained silent. Mr. Templeton, scowling heavily, ended a searching investigation of his dress coat.

"Confound it!" he muttered, returning to his trousers pockets. "I wonder what I did with that key?"

"Can't you find it?"

"If I could I wouldn't wonder what I'd done with it, would I?"

"You might. You're so very forgetful, John."

Poetic justice demanded the touch of

sarcasm in her voice; but she congratulated herself on the self-restraint of her words. Mr. Templeton growled some inarticulate reply.

"Have you tried your overcoat?" she asked solicitously.

"Twice."

"And your gloves?"

"Gloves?"

"Yes. I always carry my key in the left hand palm."

He glared at her angrily; but the troubled concern in her face disarmed him.

"Men don't do such things," he said, in the tone of one correcting a wayward child.

She allowed the rebuke to pass, gazing at him thoughtfully while he subjected his clothes to a third and equally ineffectual search.

"It's gone!" he announced decisively. "I've looked everywhere but in my shoes."

"And yet I *know* Tom gave it to you. It was when we were in the hall—just before we left—"

"And I asked you to hold it while I put on my coat."

"Yes. And I think you slipped it into your waistcoat pocket—the one on the lower right hand side."

He ran his fingers into the pocket designated. "That's the one with the hole in it—the one I asked you to sew up for me."

"Then the key must be in the lining."

"But it isn't. There's a hole in that, too."

They stared at each other for a moment in silence. Then something of the humor of the situation came to Mrs. Templeton's aid, and she turned

to the electric doorbell with a nervous laugh.

"There's nothing for it but to wake them up," she said, giving the button a vicious jab.

A feeble jangle sounded from somewhere in the lower depths of the house.

"Put more muscle into it," advised her husband.

She pressed the button harder. The jangling rose for an instant into the weak semblance of a tinkle, then died away morosely into silence. Mrs. Templeton gave her husband a despairing glance.

"It's no use. The old thing's broken."

"Let's have a try at the areaway, then."

He ran down the steps, and lighting a match descended gingerly into the dark well which gave access to the basement entrance. A growl of disgust floated up to her as she leaned over the rail.

"What's the matter?"

"It's electric, too—probably run by the same battery."

"Try it, anyway."

He did. "I can't hear the faintest sound," he grumbled. "Can you?"

She was about to answer in the negative when the precise ring of approaching footsteps grew out of the stillness of the deserted street.

"Quick, John!" she muttered hurriedly. "There's someone coming!"

"Inside the house?"

"No; along the sidewalk." She watched a burly figure emerge from the shadows beneath a lighted lamp. "I think it's—yes—it is—a policeman!"

Mr. Templeton scrambled precipitately up the areaway stairs. "Do you think he has spotted me?" he demanded in a hoarse whisper, as he ascended the front steps with a suspiciously innocent air.

"No, I don't think so. He sees us now, though. Do something, John! Pretend you've lost your watch—anything!" She bent over and began to examine the doorstep anxiously. "He's glaring at us like a hawk."

Mr. Templeton followed her example with the unpleasant sensation that a

million pins were being pressed into the small of his back. The sensation became unbearable when the officer, slackening his pace, drew up before the house.

"Lost anything?" he asked genially.

"Yes—I—I—you see—it was only a little while ago, too. It must be here, somewhere—and—"

"He has lost his watch," broke in Mrs. Templeton incisively.

"Yes—my watch," agreed Mr. Templeton with a sigh of relief. "You—you didn't happen to notice it when you came up the street?"

"No. But p'rhaps my mate will when he comes along. He's got sharp eyes, *he* has. An' he's due here in about five minutes— No—in less 'an five minutes." The emendation was accompanied by a meaning look.

Mrs. Templeton rose nobly to the occasion. "Oh, I'm so glad! You see, it's a sort of heirloom, and my husband would be broken-hearted if he'd lost it."

"Yes." Mr. Templeton's self-confidence was returning. "It has been in my family for centuries—ever since the Revolution—"

A sharp nudge from his wife warned him into silence.

"You mustn't mind what he says," she begged the officer. "He's so upset."

"So I see, ma'am. How did he come t' lose it without the chain?"

"He didn't," she began, then stopped in dismay as she caught the policeman's glance fixed on the top button of her husband's waistcoat. "Oh, that's not the one I mean," she went on in hasty explanation. "That's his—his key chain. Isn't it, love?"

Mr. Templeton started at the unexpected endearment. "Yes—certainly—certainly, my key chain. But it slipped off somehow and—"

"What slipped off?"

"What slipped off?" repeated Mr. Templeton, vaguely conscious of catastrophe. "Why the—watch, of course."

"But, if that's a key chain—"

"You don't understand," put in Mrs.

Templeton hurriedly. "He means his watch key. We've lost that, too. You see, the watch is an old one—a key winder—which makes it all the more valuable."

"That's *three* things you've lost," the policeman enumerated.

"Yes." She gave him her sweetest smile. "Isn't it provoking!"

"I should think so," he said in a gruffer tone, pushing by her up the steps.

She noted the change in his voice with a sinking heart. "He's beginning to suspect," she whispered to her husband.

"*Beginning?* He has all along. Why didn't we tell him the truth at first?"

"I don't know. We were so frightened, I suppose. It's too late now, at any rate. Look! He's examining the door."

"That's all he *has* examined. Thank heaven, we didn't try to break in!"

The man scrutinized the lock, the hinges, even the polished door knob with tantalizing thoroughness, then, drawing out a pocket lantern, he entered upon an exhaustive investigation of the upper step. To the anxious watchers an eternity had already passed.

"There's no use looking around there," said Mr. Templeton eagerly. "We've been over every inch of the ground."

"Have you?" The officer, straightening himself up, gazed thoughtfully at something in his hand.

"Oh, don't tell me you've found it!" cried Mrs. Templeton.

"I won't—'cause I haven't."

"What is it?"

"Nothin' important." The officer crumpled a scrap of paper in his hand and thrust it into his pocket. "Don't you think you'd better hike along?" he added brusquely. "There's no more use o' your hangin' around here."

"Quite right—there's none whatever," agreed Mr. Templeton, clutching his wife's arm with surprising alacrity. "Sorry to have bothered you."

"Don't mention it," returned the of-

ficer, watching them down the street out of suspicious eyes.

"That's the neatest trick I've ever seen," he muttered to himself, producing the bit of paper and studying it with admiration. "The—neatest—trick—an' it would've worked if it hadn't been for me."

Mr. Templeton, realizing that safety lay in instant flight, urged his wife at top speed along the deserted street; but at the first corner she halted resolutely.

"If you think—I'm training—for the Marathon—" she panted.

"I think you'll wish you had been—when that policeman begins to chase us."

"Let him. We've done nothing wrong."

"That's a matter of opinion—and I'm afraid we differ with him." Mr. Templeton glanced nervously over his shoulder. "He's still watching us."

"Come over here, then." She turned to the red and green lights of the corner druggist's window. "We can pretend to look at the things for sale while we decide what to do."

Mr. Templeton followed reluctantly. "He's coming after us now."

"We can let him pass by and then go back to Tom's again. We haven't tried banging on the door yet."

"No, nor dropping down the chimney—"

"You should write a play, John," she broke in sarcastically. "Your wit is delightful."

Mr. Templeton, reduced to silence, gazed past the delectable array of mustard plasters and candies, table waters and stationery, into the dim interior of the shop.

"Three o'clock," he sighed, catching a glimpse of a white-faced timepiece; then, as his glance took in the details of the room before him: "What fools we've been, Helen! We forgot the telephone."

"What telephone?"

"Tom's, of course. We can call him up and tell him to let us in." He moved over to the doorway. "Thank heaven! there's a night bell. I—"

A large figure, interposing itself,

hustled Mr. Templeton unceremoniously from the doorstep.

"None o' that," said the policeman threateningly. "I thought this'd be your lay—but it don't go."

Mr. Templeton stared at him in stupid amazement. It was Mrs. Templeton who recovered her wits first.

"You've got no right to keep my husband from going into a public drug store."

"Haven't I?" The officer swung his club with aggressive ostentation. "Who's t' hinder me?"

"My husband will." She turned on the cringing Mr. Templeton fiercely. "Don't stand there like a ninny, John. Do something—say something— Oh, if I were only a man—"

She left the rest of the sentence to be imagined. Mr. Templeton, suddenly awakening to the responsibilities of his sex, cleared his throat uncertainly.

"I—I was only going to telephone—to a friend."

"What friend?"

"Mr. French—Thomas French. He lives up the street, there—where you found us."

"I know he does. But I *didn't* know that he was your friend."

"That was our mistake." Mrs. Templeton, catching a note of warning in the man's words, took up the burden of the conversation. "We ought to have told you the truth in the beginning. The fact is that we're spending the night at the Frenchs', and have been locked out. I had the key—or, rather, my husband had it—and lost it. It was that he lost, not his watch. I said watch, I know, but I meant key. I must have got them mixed up in the excitement—I did say watch key once, if you'll remember. Well, at any rate, it's the key that's gone, and the bell's broken and we can't make anyone hear, so the only thing left is to try to call them up on the telephone."

"And, of course, you came t' this particular drug store."

"It was the nearest," she began; then, as she saw a peculiar look pass over the man's face: "Why shouldn't we come here?" she demanded.

"No reason at all. It's the most natural place f'r you t' come. I was expectin' you t' do it—only not quite so openly." He honored her with a glance of admiration. "There's some hope f'r you in the professh. You've got wits, an' know how t' use 'em. But that dub with you had better take a few lessons b'fore he goes out again or he'll get into trouble. I guess you're both pretty new at the game, anyway."

It was Mrs. Templeton's turn to be mystified. "Game? What game?"

"The game," retorted the policeman enigmatically.

Mr. Templeton plucked at his wife's sleeve. "You're only wasting time arguing with him," he whispered. "If he won't let us in we'll have to hunt up some other place."

She hung back reluctantly as he led her around the corner. "I'd just like to give him a piece of my mind."

"You've given him so many pieces of it already that he doesn't know what to think of us. If you had only stuck to the first story he might have believed us. Now he thinks we were lying when we told him the truth." He paused abruptly, warned by a certain tightness about her mouth of the danger of recrimination. "Well, it's done, anyway," he added with resigned patience, "so there's no use bothering about it. Keep your eyes open for the first telephone sign."

There is no loneliness like that of a great city. The broad length of Fifth Avenue, stretching drearily before them, seemed like a forgotten highway cut through a metropolis of the dead. Here and there a ghostly figure skulked in the flickering shadows of an arc light, or, at rarer intervals, a belated cab, rumbling out of a side street, swayed drowsily across their line of vision, only to be again swallowed up in the gloom. In the vast stillness of the night their footsteps struck out eerie echoes behind them, and twice Mrs. Templeton glanced back fearfully over her shoulder. The third time her fears were confirmed.

"He's still following us," she whispered under her breath.

"Who—the policeman?"

"Yes. It's becoming an obsession."

"It's becoming damnable. There are probably a hundred criminals within easy reaching distance, and he insists on tracking us."

"Well, at any rate, he keeps those hundred criminals away."

"Yes—and incidentally keeps us from getting to bed. Is that a drug store? The one with the lighted window?"

"It looks like it. Yes—it is. And it has a telephone, too."

Mr. Templeton quickened his pace. The officer fell into a sort of jog trot behind them.

"If he tries to stop me again, I'll brain him."

"With what?" demanded Mrs. Templeton.

"With his own club," gasped her husband recklessly, throwing open the glass door and bursting into the shop.

She followed him, panting, and leaned heavily against a counter. A disheveled youth in shirt sleeves appeared from somewhere in the rear.

"Lady sick?" he inquired with languid interest.

"No—I want to telephone."

"Well, I don't mind. Go ahead."

Mr. Templeton vanished into the nearest booth. The youth leaned back lazily against the cash register.

"Sort o' warmish, isn't it?"

"Isn't it?" Mrs. Templeton's eyes were fixed anxiously upon the profile of her husband as it was projected against the glass window of the booth.

"I said 'Isn't it?'" the youth reminded her.

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I—I wasn't listening." She turned away her eyes with an effort. "No—I don't think it is."

"Seventy degrees at noon today—an' this th' middle o' February!" The youth's tone was aggressive. "If you don't call that hot—"

"Yes—yes, I do," she assented hurriedly. "Frightfully hot." She moved a little nearer to the booth in an attempt to discourage him.

"Over two hundred degrees excess

since the first o' th' year," he went on cheerfully. "An' no cold weather in sight."

She nodded politely.

"An' they're havin' blizzards in England," he added as a parting shot.

Mrs. Templeton, catching a faint sound outside, threw a fleeting glance toward the front window and shivered. The youth, regarding her action as a response to his words, was emboldened to continue.

"Yes. Twelve inches o' snow in London yesterday, an' six in—"

The door of the booth creaked open, and Mr. Templeton's hand was thrust out.

"Get me change for that, Helen," he said in muffled tones, dropping a half dollar into her extended palm.

The youth obligingly accepted the coin and returned her two quarters.

"As I was sayin', it was six inches in Paris an' four in—"

"I want a dime—a *ten-cent piece*," broke in Mr. Templeton's voice angrily. "Where does that young idiot think I'm telephoning to—Chicago?"

"How was I t' know?" grumbled the youth, making the required change with provoking slowness. "We had a feller in here once that telephoned t' St. Louis—" The words died suddenly on his lips as his glance lighted on the rotund form of the policeman framed in the window. "By crikey! A copper! Is he after you people?"

"He's certainly not before us," retorted Mrs. Templeton laconically. "Would you mind giving me that change?"

The youth looked at the coins in his hand, then back at the woman suspiciously. "How do I know that half dollar's good?"

"You've had a chance to examine it."

"Yes. But I didn't." He turned to the cash register and fumbled for a moment in its drawer. "An' the trouble of it is, I don't remember which you gave me. There are six of 'em here." He arranged them in a neat row upon the counter and stared at them in perplexity.

Mrs. Templeton swung impatiently to the booth. "Give me some more money, John."

"I haven't any more—that's my last penny. What's the matter?"

"He thinks we gave him a counterfeit."

"He does, does he!" Mr. Templeton dropped the receiver with a bang. "I'll show him—"

"No, John—no!" She caught his arm in frantic appeal. "Don't do anything rash! The policeman's watching."

A glimpse at the window, with the officer's nose now flattened against the pane, reduced Mr. Templeton to a grudging acquiescence. The youth, cocking his head to catch the ring of the metal, was busily testing the pieces of money on the counter.

"Ha! I thought so!" He held up a coin with a triumphant grin. "That's the one you gave me."

"How do you know it is?"

"'Cause it's the only bad one."

"That's no reason; that's—"

"Deduction."

"Deduction be damned!" Mr. Templeton brought his fist down with reckless force on the top of a glass showcase. "Hand over that money, or I'll—"

"Now, don't get huffy." The youth met Mr. Templeton's scowling glance with a cheerful smile. "'Tain't my fault if you carry a copper around as a bodyguard, is it? An' 'tain't my fault if your carryin' him around makes me suspect you." He looked meditatively at the counterfeit coin in his palm. "Tell you what I'll do," he went on with judicial slowness: "you can have it back, if you want it—'tisin't any good round here, anyway—or I'll call the copper in, an' if he says you're on the level, I'll pretend you didn't give it to me and hand you out a good one."

A vision of the probable result of the proposed interview flashed through Mr. Templeton's mind. "Give it to me," he decided hastily.

"That is th' wiser course," the youth approved, relinquishing the counterfeit

half dollar. "Say! You've left th' receiver off the hook."

"Hang it up yourself," shot Mr. Templeton over his shoulder. "I've finished with it."

He opened the door for his wife to pass through, then closed it after him with a vicious bang. The policeman, waiting for them to choose their course, fell into his accustomed place behind them.

"Did you get Tom on the 'phone?" asked Mrs. Templeton.

"No—and I tried the Schuylers, too, but there was no answer."

"Whom did you finally get?"

"Sam Forrest. She had us connected—"

"But he lives in Brooklyn."

"I know it. But we could have taken the car over. I had enough money for that—*then*."

Mrs. Templeton considered. "We might still try to palm off that fifty cents."

"And be arrested for passing counterfeits? That fellow back there is just crazy to nab us."

She shivered by way of reply; and for several blocks they walked on in gloomy silence.

"I'll drop if we go much farther," she said at last. "Couldn't we hunt up some hotel, John—somewhere?"

"They'd never take us in at this time of night."

"They might, if they knew you. What's the name of the place where you stayed last summer—when I was in Canada?"

"The Audubon? That's not a bad idea. And it's not far from here, either."

He turned her up a cross street. The policeman hastened his pace in evidence of his interest.

"We're only going over to Broadway," Mr. Templeton called back sweetly.

The beckoning lights of the great thoroughfare ahead of them aroused even Mrs. Templeton's flagging courage; and they traversed the few intervening blocks with hopeful steps. A dim light, burning in the deserted lobby of

the hotel, revealed the welcome figure of a night clerk peacefully nodding behind the desk. Mr. Templeton rang the bell.

"Luck's with us," he said, as the clerk unlocked the door. "This fellow was here last summer."

The clerk thrust his nose through an inch-wide crack. "What d'you want?" he demanded grumblingly.

"A double room—for the night."

"For the day, I guess. D'you know what time it is?"

"I have a hazy idea. I'm John Templeton, of Dewhurst. If you'll remember, I stayed here for two weeks last July."

The clerk studied Mr. Templeton's features perfunctorily. "You look sort o' familiar," he admitted in grudging assent. "But so would a hundred—" His eyes lighted upon the policeman hovering in the background. "Where's your baggage?" he asked sharply.

"We haven't any. The fact is—"

"Five dollars down, then. We charge in advance—"

"I know, but I haven't any money, either. You see, we are staying at Mr. French's—Mr. Thomas French's—on Fifty-eighth Street—and, by the way, he had a room here, too. Don't you recollect it? We spent most of our time together."

"Yes—I'm beginning to." The door opened a trifle wider. "But you were alone then."

"This is my wife."

"Oh!" The clerk hesitated, his eyes again seeking the policeman.

Mr. Templeton's heart sank as he surprised the look which passed between them. "Well?" he demanded.

"This is a respectable hotel," the other asserted, with a parting glance at the lady. "Sorry, but we're all filled up."

The door clanged shut and they watched the departing clerk return to his chair and resume his interrupted nap.

"Well, of all the insults!" exclaimed Mrs. Templeton furiously.

"I'll come back tomorrow—today—and wring his fat neck," Mr. Templeton

assured her, drawing her down the street.

The officer smiled knowingly to himself as he fell into step in their rear.

"This is becoming unbearable," moaned Mrs. Templeton. "We'll never be able to get anywhere as long as he tags at our heels."

"You might ask him, as a favor, to leave us," suggested her husband sarcastically.

"And you might spend your time to better advantage," she retorted, "by thinking up some plan."

"I have," he answered with unexpected readiness. "We must separate."

"Separate?"

"Yes. When we reach the next corner you turn to the right and I'll go straight on."

"But I can't wander round the streets alone, John. I'd be frightened—"

"You won't have to. He'll be only too glad to keep you company—I'll see to that." Mr. Templeton, half turning, made a pretense of passing something to his wife. "Take them," he said in a loud stage whisper. "He'll think I still have them. And when I've lured him off the track, run for your life."

Mrs. Templeton accepted the pretended transfer with an admirable display of the dramatic values. Her husband's backward glance revealed the comforting fact that the officer was "on."

"Now," he resumed in a low tone, "you're to lead him about for a while, then gradually work back to Tom's house. I'll go straight there and get in somehow. By the time you've arrived I'll have Tom at the door to set matters right. Good luck to you."

"Good luck."

Mrs. Templeton swept around the corner, followed by the ubiquitous policeman. Mr. Templeton crossed the street sedately, then, when out of sight of the others, set off at a brisk pace for the French abode.

But, in his joy at the success of his scheme, he lost sight of that most

important axiom of geometry which states that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points; and he had covered many blocks of the slanting course of Broadway before he realized that he was leaving, rather than approaching, his destination. A hurried retracing of steps, together with a judicial negotiation of side streets and alleys, finally brought him back to familiar surroundings; but the time which he had lost had already thrown his plans so far awry that he advanced upon the house with a deep sense of foreboding. A glimpse of his wife waiting alone for him upon the steps added the visual proof to his fears.

"Where's the policeman?" he demanded abruptly.

"I don't know. He only walked a block with me, then turned up Sixth Avenue. I went on to Fifth Avenue, and wandered back here. Where on earth have you been, John? I thought you were never coming."

"I—I got lost," he mumbled, looking intently up and down the street. "Then you've seen nothing of him?" he reiterated.

"Nothing. And he would have had plenty of time to get back here—even before I did—if he had wished. It looks as though he had given us up, doesn't it?"

"It does, indeed." Mr. Templeton's hopes rose with mercurial rapidity. "But we won't take any chances," he went on, clambering down into the inky blackness of the areaway and running his fingers carefully over the sashes of the solitary window. "Thank heaven, it's an old-fashioned catch. I can work it open easily with my knife."

Mrs. Templeton, following him, waited patiently while entrance was effected.

"I'm not such a bad burglar, after all," he chuckled, throwing up the window.

"At last!" she breathed with a sigh of relief—then shrieked in terror as a burly figure emerged from the shadows which enshrouded the areaway beyond.

"I thought I'd be a little beforehand," the policeman remarked genially.

And Mr. Templeton, turning at the unexpected appearance, almost fell into the officer's arms.

"So when they separated, I made b'lieve t' follow th' female," continued the policeman, waving his hand toward the bedraggled form of Mrs. Templeton as she leaned wearily beside her husband against the station-house rail. "But th' first chance I got I chased back t' th' house, an' caught 'em as they were pryin' open the winder. It's my idea, sir"—he leaned over the dingy desk and lowered his voice confidentially—"it's my idea that they belong t' that new bunch that's been workin' round lately—that swell gang."

The officer addressed favored the two despondent figures before him with a cold, impersonal stare. "They're new to me," he assented slowly.

"Yes. An' they've got a new wrinkle that's a corker. When I saw 'em examin' th' doorstep I got a bit suspicious. So I made a little search myself, an' this is what I found." The policeman, producing the crumpled scrap of paper, spread it out before his superior. "You can see f'r yourself, sir, how easy it would've been f'r 'em t' get in. They must've been watchin' when Mr. French stuck it under th' door—or p'rhaps they heard him say somethin' about it. At any rate, they seemed t' know what was in it—even though they hadn't found it when I come up."

"How do you make that out?"

"'Cause they went right off t' th' drug store mentioned there an' kicked like steers—beggin' th' lady's pardon—when I wouldn't let 'em go in."

"Ah!" The other's face displayed a glimmer of interest. "But they couldn't have done anything without this. It's virtually an order."

"I know it, sir. I s'pose they thought they could bluff it out. There's th' telephone, sir. Shall I answer it?"

His superior nodded.

Mr. Templeton moistened his lips. "If you'll let me explain—"

"You'd better not. Everything you

say will be used against you. Well, Tompkins?"

"It's Mr. French himself, sir," reported the returning policeman. "He's just discovered th' open winder. I told him we had th' birds here, so he's comin' right around."

"Thank Heaven!" murmured Mrs. Templeton, sinking down on a bench.

Hatless, collarless and giving evidence of violent exertions, Mr. Thomas French burst into the station house like a whirlwind.

"Where are they?" he panted. "It's the first time—" He paused in amazement as Mr. Templeton rose solemnly to greet him. "John!" he cried. "And Helen, too! What on earth are you doing here?"

"Being done, mostly," returned Mr. Templeton. "If you'll kindly explain to our mutton-headed friend our exact status in your household, I shall be exceedingly obliged."

"But I don't understand. They told me they had the burglars—"

"We're 'it,' as far as that goes."

"You? But why—"

"It was the only mode of entrance left open to us. As a sleep producer the non-ringable bell has no equal. And, as I had lost the key—"

"You left it on the hall table."

"No; it slipped through a hole in my pocket."

"You left it on the hall table," Mr. French insisted. "I found it after you'd gone and took it over to the drug store for you to call for it. Didn't you get my note?"

"Do you mean that dog-eared hen scratch?" demanded Mr. Templeton

with an utter disregard for zoölogical distinctions, pointing at the bit of paper on the desk.

"Yes. You see, I slipped it under the door, so that—"

"The police might suspect us. New York is paved with such good intentions, Tom. The only trouble is, it's rather tiring on the feet."

"I'm awfully sorry—"

"You needn't be. We entered quite into the fun of the thing—especially Helen. If it hadn't been for her, and her clever ruses about watch keys and stem winders, the whole thing would have fallen through miserably."

He waited for the accustomed retort, but Mrs. Templeton, succumbing to an overweening fatigue, was slumbering blissfully on the bench.

"Poor girl!" said Mr. French compassionately. "Wake her up, John, and let's get her home."

They aroused her with difficulty, and, guiding her between them, moved over to the door. The policeman darted after them with a blanched face.

"Are you coming, too?" asked Mr. Templeton in his sweetest tones. "How good of you! It will be quite home-like—"

But the man had clutched at his sleeve with a despairing grasp. "Don't prosecute me—for God's sake, sir!" he entreated earnestly. "I'm a poor man, with a wife and eight children—"

"A wife—and eight children?" repeated Mr. Templeton pityingly. "I couldn't think of it. Why, you're eight times worse off than I am. I've only got a wife."



"IS Jones on the stage now?"

"Oh, yes; he's playing a leading part in 'The Khedive's Favorite.'"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, he leads the camel in the Streets of Cairo scene."

SOME married couples are like spectacles; they are not mates, but are held together by a golden frame.

MY WIFE AND I

By CHARLES FRANCIS READ

WE are both of us, my wife and I, a little, a mere trifle, past forty; we were married some twenty years ago and have four children—this, and you have in one breath the best and the worst there is to tell about us. Frank was a decidedly good-looking girl when I married her, and she is still most satisfactory in this respect. As for myself, I still retain a good part of my hair and teeth and boast a belt line within three inches of what it was when I was twenty-five; more than this would be unbecoming of the staid possessor of three sons and a daughter to set forth.

A number of years ago we married for love and for as many years afterwards we lived together in domestic contentment. The children came to us and we accepted them dutifully, thankfully. Frank gave to them of herself unsparingly, and duty and affection spurred me on in an ever-increasing effort to provide for them all in a manner that might, part way at least, suffice my pride. This is, however, not the story of another woman, nor yet of another man—and I would not have you look for any such glittering lure. If the purple and the crimson had faded from the morning sky of our day, noon found us under no stormy or capricious heavens, but rather, beneath the shelter of a canopy that, even if a trifle drab in its coloring, still afforded a most grateful shade and entirely dependable atmospheric conditions.

In other words, my wife and I were quietly and imperceptibly settling down into a humdrum middle age, when one evening late last May an odd thing happened that has altered the current of our

lives. The children were abed and I had been reading for sometime while Frank played the piano, until, with the final strain of a familiar air I dropped my magazine to my lap and looked up. "That was fine!" I exclaimed. "Great!" I added with ardor and some compunction as I noted her hands resting listlessly upon the keys and the corners of her mouth drooping wearily. Ruthlessly sacrificing a most interesting article, I tossed my magazine negligently upon the table; for she sometimes tells me that I would rather read nowadays than listen to her music—although in this my wife is quite wrong, for I enjoy it as much as I ever did, only now I enjoy it as a subtle undercurrent to my thought while I read, and all the more so because it is so; which to me is a perfectly lucid and reasonable explanation, even though she professes not to understand it.

"What was it, Frank?" I persisted, getting up and going over to the piano, for she was obstinately mute, and in this I observed a sign of possible trouble.

"Oh, it's only your nocturne," she murmured, now a trifle bitterly as she began to run over the keys aimlessly again.

"Then why didn't you say so at first, dear?" I blundered on, bending over to kiss her as I had always done when she played the little air I had called my own in the days of our courtship. I had conscientiously continued this custom even in later years with the feeling that a bit of such sentiment always pleases a woman and certainly does the man no harm.

But now, in place of turning her face

up to mine as usual, my wife quickly turned away her head and ordered me somewhat sharply back to my chair, in consequence of which I was compelled to content myself with a peck upon one ear and an ignominious return to the comfort of my pipe.

For sometime she turned the music over at random, sounding now and again a few tentative notes from one thing or another as they came along. Finally she struck into a soft, stately march built about a queer, insinuating Oriental air. Very gradually the music grew louder and strange thrills and shivers began to run up and down my spine, for my wife is really a remarkable player. Still louder—and suddenly I seemed to feel the ground tremble as though beneath the orderly approach of a multitude. Louder yet—and, with the blare of trumpet and the roll of kettledrum, swinging around the bend of a crooked, foreign street, I plainly saw through the smoke of my pipe a host of mounted men, swarthy, stately fellows with straight noses and flashing eyes, riding upon storybook steeds with arching necks, red nostrils and mincing feet. And after them came a troop of camel riders with flowing burnouses; and then great shuffling elephants, all hidden beneath silk trap-pings heavy with embroidery and jewels, and bearing upon their backs magnificent howdahs, in which sat still other brown-eyed, turbaned men with stern, unfathomable faces.

The music crashed away into abrupt silence and I came to myself with a start, to find my wife looking down at me with an odd little smile upon her lips. She was panting a little from her exertion and her face was flushed—have I said she was past forty? God forgive me the heresy! She was not thirty then, a mere girl with the poise of a woman. She had stirred me and she knew it, for when I begged her to play the thing over again her smile became consciously gracious.

"We mustn't wake the children," she affected to object. "It is ten already."

"Oh, darn the children!" I exclaimed with quick exasperation. "We've

done nothing but adjust ourselves to them all their lives." The words were not out of my mouth before I realized the enormity of the treason I had uttered. If you yourself happen to have spent twenty years, more or less, in the continuous effort to be a good parent, you can somewhat appreciate the shock I experienced at the discovery in myself of this lingering depravity. In another moment I knew Frank would spring up with reproachful eyes and a "Why, Jack! You forget how *very* late Margaret was up at the party last night—and Don's throat was a little sore this evening. I must go up and look at him this minute. *Do* you suppose it could be diphtheria?"

This I looked for with the confidence of despair as I raked my wits in vain for an explanation of my precipitate remark. Then, as I stared helplessly at my wife, she slowly smiled down at me again with full-lidded, half-closed eyes—mysteriously, provocatively; and all at once I recalled what I had long since forgotten: that she had had a record of three engagements before I had finally succeeded in establishing the permanency of my own, and that the other girls had jealously whispered it of her in those days that her influence over men was something positively uncanny! Queer I had mislaid this memory so long! And I had read poetry with her then, and spelled out in words of one syllable my callow philosophy of life to her sympathetic ears! Ah, me! Four children and an income keeping tardy pace! Ho, hum!

I straightened abruptly in my chair and returned her smiling gaze unwaveringly. "Play that thing over again, Frank," I demanded. "Please, dear," I added as she still looked down at me in queer, measuring, challenging fashion.

"Very well—Your Majesty," she assented with a puckering of the lips and a shrug of the shoulders as she turned to the piano again. Gad! I thrilled in spite of myself at the old term—my name happens to be King, you know—though no one realizes better than myself that there is little enough of the

monarch about the average paterfamilias of twenty years' standing. And the old time distracting pout—I had thought the method of its formation long ago forgotten.

Once more the stately march swelled in volume, and again to the beat of its magnificent measures the host swung into view, trampling by with eyes fixed upon the far horizon. Only *this* time as it passed, a lovely woman leaned out from one of the gilded howdahs and smiled down at me—and the face and the smile were those of my wife! I sprang to my feet and caught her in my arms. "Why, Frank, girl," I cried out dizzily, "we're young yet, you and I—we're *young!*" and I lifted her to her feet and kissed her upon her lips that are still soft and full.

"Hasn't it taken you a long time to make this remarkable discovery?" she panted, as she struggled from my grasp in most unwifely fashion and retreated to the end of the room. Her eyes were sparkling wickedly now and her cheeks were glowing. "Tomorrow we'll forget this temporary insanity," she added mockingly, "and we'll go back to the office and the children's stockings. We can't do anything else—so what is the use of ever dreaming?" There were overtones of wistfulness about the last words that belied her air and hurt me where I had never felt a hurt before. My own sudden mood of rebellion disturbed me; the music did not explain it all. Some long, subconscious train of thought had been touched off, rocket-like, by the fire of the stirring measures.

"No, we'll not," I answered slowly and stoutly as I shook out my pipe and carefully filled and lighted it again. The words were a mere empty negation, but as I discarded the match inspiration sprang full-fledged from out the smoking bowl. "I have it!" I cried out so sharply that my wife started. "Just the other day Kingsley dropped into the office to ask me to find someone, if I could, to take over his place for the summer—lock, stock and barrel. They are going abroad.

"Now—what we'll do, girl," I hurried on with as great an air of confi-

dence as I could muster, "is to take the place ourselves—cook, maid and man, the whole business—for a month at least, or until I find someone that wants it for the entire summer. The Kingsleys go next week," I concluded with quiet aplomb, eying my wife meantime with secret misgiving, for she does not always fall in any too readily with my plans.

She had seated herself judiciously now upon the arm of a chair with her head aslant and a meditative finger to her chin. She did not appear at all startled. "The Kingsley place," she murmured softly, and I could see her eyes kindle as she rolled the name upon her tongue. We had loved the old place for years, with its entire block of shaded lawn surrounded upon three sides by a tall, dense lilac hedge and fronted by another of barberry bushes. Often my wife had artlessly bent the course of our Sunday walks in that direction, planning fancifully as we passed it for the time when we should have a place like it for our own. The ancient cement-faced house stands so square and with so great an air of leisured dignity upon its sharply terraced elevation, holding itself so tantalizingly aloof in the conscious charm of its Georgian doorway. A great hemlock tree flanks it upon the one side and a tall fir upon the other, and in and out among the other trees and flower beds run tiny gravel walks. There is, too, a tennis court all freshly kept, though what old Kingsley does with it is more than I know. I haven't played a game of tennis myself for ten years, and yet it always makes me feel young just to look at one. Possibly this is the reason why Kingsley himself keeps it up so carefully.

"But the children?" Frank at last objected faintly. "They never in the world would have Don and Bobs running wild over everything; they *are* just a wee bit destructive, you know."

I chuckled inwardly at this. Here lay my opening and here my suddenly acquired skill as a diplomat was to be put to the test. "Let Mrs. Dean come over here, then, and take care of the

children." I rejoined matter-of-factly. Mrs. Dean is one of the fine old untrained kind of nurses that have had children of their own and are not above kissing a bruise and saying, "Dear me!" and "My goodness gracious!" when anything goes wrong. Not that our children need a great deal of this sort of a thing, however, but she is of that kind, anyway. "They will be perfectly safe with her," I went on, "and you will not have the care and worry to interfere with your good time."

I took a turn about the room and then glanced down at my wife to find her smiling—yes, actually grinning up at me. "Speak for yourself, John," she quoted softly. Confound these bright women, anyway! I like them—but they overdo it at times.

However, the upshot of the matter was that another week found us settled in the old house with our bags and a steamer trunk. No one but Mrs. Dean and my stenographer—both of them sworn to secrecy—knew where we were. The cook and the maid had taken us upon trial, and Jurgens, the stolid gardener and man of all work, didn't seem to care one way or the other. The glamour had faded a bit meanwhile, but the eye of faith remained clear, and that first evening out upon the Georgian porchway we entered into full possession of the things hoped for. The birds were singing their good night songs and the sky was full of rose. As I smoked an after-dinner pipe Frank drew up close beside me in the twilight with a happy sigh, that found quick echo in my own breast that fairly brimmed over with a sense of emancipation and content.

When the stars came out we wandered down upon the open plot that stretches from the terrace to the barberry hedge. I had not paid much attention to the stars for a very long time, and I found that I was not even sure of the location of Venus, to say nothing of all the rest. But Frank, I soon found, knew more about them than seemed to me consistent with a strictly amateur standing. Sirius, the Belt of Orion, the Lion and the Bear—she pointed them all

out to me with the calm certainty of definite knowledge.

"Why didn't you ever say anything to me about this before?" I complained as we came back to the house. It grieved me in a way to think she could have kept it all from me for so long—scarcely wifely, you know.

Before she answered we had entered the lighted hall and I could see she was smiling. "You forget, Jack," she slowly replied, "that whenever I have said anything about them you have merely said 'Yes, yes,' and have ducked your head immediately." Of course I denied this; but secretly I knew that she was right.

The next morning very early a long drawn "Wo-hoo!" from the foot of the stairs wakened me and when I finally got down I found her arranging some tulips upon the breakfast table. Just inside the door I stopped with a whistle of astonishment, at which she bent still further over with a flush on her cheeks that came near to rivaling the flowers themselves. Involuntarily my hand went to my head in haste to pat the locks I am beginning to arrange with some care over the very top of it. She was wearing some sort of a vaguely familiar sailor suit—borrowed from her daughter, I have since discovered—low at the neck and high at the ankle, and her hair fluffed out distractingly.

"Jurgens is to show me something about scientific gardening after breakfast," she explained calmly as she faced about with an odd little air of defiance. "Huh!" I returned, strangely embarrassed by the admiration I could not find words for. "I don't think Jurgens is very good-looking—and, besides, he tells me he is married." With this I started toward her, but with an upward thrust of her pretty chin and a soft "Poof!" she was out of the room by another door before I could catch her.

That first quiet, leisurely breakfast, what a solid comfort it was! The hard baked rolls and the coffee were exactly right; the bacon and eggs were done to a turn, and—to mingle sentiment with sensation—the girl in the sailor suit

was a revelation. "Well," I remarked with a sigh of repletion and regret as I rose from the table at last and folded up my neglected paper, "if you are going to devote yourself to Jurgens this morning I suppose I might as well run down to the office for a while. Johnson said something yesterday about—"

"Jack King, you will do nothing of the kind," my wife interrupted hastily with a quaver of indignation. "You told me Miss Haywood was to bring your mail up here. You are not to set foot in the office unless it is absolutely necessary—you *promised* me this."

"Yes, but—" I began weakly.

"You may watch Jurgens and me," she continued calmly, "or you may read. I brought that new work on Phlegmatic Philosophy with me, and the Kingsleys have a perfectly gorgeous library of the classics. You know you have always been sighing for time to do some heavy reading."

I could not deny this—and much less could I deny the arms suddenly and unexpectedly thrown about my neck and the tender, albeit somewhat mischievous, light in the brown eyes upturned to my own. And so I remained at home, though I'll not deny that for a few days the mornings, at least, were a bit long. My short vacations of previous years had mostly been restless affairs spent in traveling, hunting or fishing, and now I found it hard work to relax and attach myself to one quiet spot. Gradually, however, the spell of the old place worked its will with me and I slowly learned to loaf and invite my soul. I worked far enough into the new system of philosophy to find that I was one of the "tough-minded," as the author felicitously expresses it, and there I let the matter drop, contented to rest in a knowledge of this one hard-sounding truth without investigating further. Far better I loved to sit out upon the fresh-clipped lawn with my back to a tree trunk and my pipe between my teeth, reading the latest best seller or digesting my own philosophy of life.

Here Frank would join me when her gardening was over, and sitting down

before me in tailor fashion, would listen to my discourse in the sweetly serious way of twenty years before. There were no absent-minded assents now, nor low-voiced admonitions to the children to interrupt me. I flatter myself that I talk rather well when I am in earnest, but for a long, long time I had been able to command my wife's single-minded attention only when the children were abed—and then it had usually happened that she was too sleepy to listen.

One afternoon, by way of a change, I suggested going to a ball game. Ever since I could remember I had glanced at the scores and standings of the various clubs as a matter of daily routine, but I had not seen a game for so long that I scarcely remembered in which direction the runner circled the diamond. Frank was inclined to rebel at first, but I reminded her that there had once been a time when she had not been so averse to going with me to a college game of ball, and that nowadays fully half of our professional players are college men. I have not attempted to verify this extempore estimate since then, and it may be a trifle high. Our town is in a minor league, anyway, and I suspect that the men we saw play that afternoon had not taken a very long college course, to say the most.

The game's the thing, however; and this one was everything that could be desired throughout its ten snappy innings. When the last man was out I recalled my wife's presence, straightened out a big dent in my hat with a sidelong glance at her, adjusted my tie in silence and brushed off my coat.

"Jack," she inquired sweetly when we had reached the street, "didn't you say you had not seen a ball game for years and that it would be amusing mainly as a study of human nature?"

"Maybe I did. Funny how it all comes back to one," I returned nonchalantly, trying hard meanwhile to recall just what I might have done during the game. In my college days I had acquired some reputation as a rooter—possibly I had suffered a relapse without being fully aware of it myself.

"Oh, you needn't worry," she continued, evidently misinterpreting my troubled look. "I believe you—at least that about not having seen a game for a long time. Beyond the shadow of a doubt you put the pent-up enthusiasm of five years at least into that game." And then she went on to accuse me of pounding a good-natured man in front of me with my hat, of rising in my seat repeatedly to hurl hard names at the umpire and of various other misdemeanors of a more petty nature. I don't know yet just how much of this, if any, arose from her fertile imagination; but I do know that when we reached home she suddenly seized my arm and pulling me down to her, whispered in my ear something about loving to have me forget myself and act in such a nice, funny boy way—now wasn't that odd?

That evening I remember we had a late dinner and we both dressed for it. Carson and his wife, who had found out in some way where we were, dropped in afterwards to call, and we had hard work to convince them that we were not just about to start out for some party or other. They are nice people, the Carsons, and they live in a very nice way, too; but we could easily see that they considered it foolish business for us, at our age, to be dressing up of an evening merely for one another. When they had gone Frank inveigled me into singing "Gipsy John" and a lot of other songs for which I have neither the wind nor the range nowadays. Since my daughter turned the critical age of sixteen I have given up this pastime; but I love it still, and this night my wife applauded my efforts so faithfully and with such evident pride that I felt fairly ashamed of myself for neglecting it so long.

When my voice grew husky at last she played for me while I sat and smoked and journeyed this way and that as fancy and the music led me. Between my journeyings I stopped to note that now her hands never fell listlessly upon the keys, and that her face showed no sign of weariness as she played on and on.

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Now and then of an early morning I would hire a staid old horse and we would drive leisurely out to a late breakfast in an old inn up in the hills. It was then that I most thoroughly refreshed my memory as to my wife's "uncanny" influence over men. It was an easy thing to do, and most delightful in the doing. I wondered why I had let this fine, sweet thing lie dormant so long. It is an old theme I know, this matter of foolish lovers crystallizing into staid men of affairs; and very possibly it is all a part of nature's order—but this doesn't make it any pleasanter to contemplate when the fact is suddenly brought home to one.

I came back one noon from a very necessary morning's work at the office to find Jurgens and my wife erecting a tent out upon the lawn beneath some elms. Frank proudly informed me that she had discovered it upon an exploring expedition up in the hay loft of the barn. Now I have slept in a tent many times and in many places and in all kinds of weather, but the sight of this one out upon the Kingsley lawn in some manner tickled me immensely. I asked her what she intended to do with it and joked her about it in the usual marital way, but she merely bent lower over the pegs and pulled harder at the ropes with flushed face and determined lips until I was fairly shamed into helping them with it.

When we had made everything taut at last, she straightened up resiliently while I came up with my hands to my knees and a sigh I would have given a good deal to recall the moment it escaped me. It really meant nothing at all; was merely the gusty remonstrance of middle age, but how she did commiserate me then, and how solicitously she offered to apply a porous plaster to my back! She had made up her mind to sleep out of doors that night, but it would evidently never do for me to attempt it—I was growing too old and rheumatically for such foolishness! What I needed was a hot-water bag and a warm, comfy room.

In all this I recognized the retort

courteous and accepted it with as good grace as possible, but wild horses couldn't have kept me from the tent after that, and so in the afternoon we installed our cots.

And, after all, do you know, it proved to be great fun. Of course we couldn't get to sleep, so we lay there and talked and talked with the moonlight filtering down through the trees and in through the open tent flap to remind us of many things we had long forgotten. It was not mosquito time yet, and the air was soft, and now and then a screech owl somewhere hoo-hooed in a far off, nearby, mysterious way. I remembered how I used to beg my mother to let me sleep out of doors, and I felt like saying my prayers all over again. Toward midnight we put on our dressing gowns and went out into the full moonlight. Have you stopped in a long while to look down at your wife's face in the moonlight? Possibly a surprise awaits you if you have not. If she happens to know you are looking at her in a particular way, it may not be your wife's face at all that you will see, but that of a girl of long ago, dimpling up at you in a way to fairly make your heart stand still. Try it now and then, you young-old fellows in the forties.

Toward morning the inevitable shower came up and we speedily found that our shelter was far from waterproof. The rain, however, did not last long and I was surprised to find how gaily Frank took it—for she has not always been noted for a patient endurance of physical discomfort. Each day I seemed to find something new in a nature I had a long time ago foolishly thought to read like an open book.

We had been living in the Kingsley place three weeks now, and the long June days were not half long enough for all we found to do in them. The children were in fine health and doing very well without us—a fact that hurt my wife just a bit, I think; the office was taking care of itself fairly well, thanks to the efficiency of Miss Haywood; and a few old friends who had ferreted out our secret dropped in now and then to laugh at us openly for our

foolishness—and, I have not a doubt, to go away again filled with secret envy. Frank took to working with her water colors again, which came about indirectly from our dropping into an art store one day and seeing there the picture of a tall linden tree with cloud masses showing gray through its branches as they sprayed out in early leaf. It was a startling effect, though to my mind quite unnatural. Frank, however, thought better of it and asked the price. "An original water color, valued at three hundred dollars," the man replied with the solemn, didactic manner of his kind, whereupon I nodded my head wisely and my wife allowed the matter to rest. Three hundred dollars!—for *that*!

It was the very next morning, I think, that I heard Frank calling to me from the garden. When I reached her, she pointed silently to a great basswood tree outlining itself high against the sky back of the house. "Yes?" I inquired, looking vainly upward in the direction of her finger. "What is it—some new bird?"

"No, no, Jack!" she exclaimed impatiently. "Can't you see it—the picture of the linden tree? Have you forgotten it already?" And, by George, there it was, in fuller leaf to be sure, but with that same strange effect of cloud and branch—the most natural thing in the world. A man who can see things like that and transfer them to paper *ought* to charge a big price for them.

At last, however, there came a morning when I started down to the office with a heavy heart. Miss Haywood had telephoned me the day before that a man would be in at ten to see me about the Kingsley place—someone who knew all about the place, who wanted immediate possession and merely wished to talk over the conditions of rental. I am in the real estate business and the commission upon this transaction would mean a very fair thing to me; but I had no heart for it. Our month would soon be up, but I hated to lose a day of it. I must have pulled a very lugubrious face as I told Frank

about it, for she kissed me quite suddenly and vigorously as I started off, and then with a little laugh, took the corners of my mouth in her fingers and gave them a sharp upward twist. "Never mind, Jack!" she cried. "It's going to last, anyway. We'll *make* it."

So I went down to the office somewhat heartened up and met my man. I have never seen quite such an irritatingly snapshot sort of a fellow—you seemed to hear the click of an invisible shutter with his every move. In three minutes he had established his identity and financial responsibility. In a couple of minutes more he had satisfied himself as to the sanitary condition of the house. He would take possession the next day; and in a few minutes more he had signed a lease and was gone.

Work had gradually piled up at the office in my absence and I did not get away until six that evening. It was very evident that my vacation must cease at once, and, selfish brute that I am, I could not but extract a secret comfort from this, salving my conscience with the thought that Frank would not care to stay in the Kingsley place without me, anyway.

As I stepped in the door she met me, refulgent in a new evening gown I had heard much talk of in the past two weeks. "Does Your Majesty approve?" she asked with a low courtsey, and then as I stood helplessly agape she cut short my wordless praise with a quick, "Now hurry up and array yourself accordingly, Jack. We'll fiddle tonight while Rome burns." Brave girl! She put my depression to shame, and I hurried upstairs to dive into my evening clothes with a determination not to be outdone by a mere woman.

I had scarcely got downstairs, again when the door bell rang, and I opened to find Mr. and Mrs. Fortney at the threshold, and behind them Stevenson and his wife, and after them Jack Harding and his wife, and after them still others. Two by two they trooped in—the pick of all our friends—until I stopped taking count. Frank had ar-

ranged it all that afternoon, it seemed—my first real surprise party.

We went out into the dining room a little later. There was a great snowy table fairly banked with the choicest of Jurgens's flowers. "They were Jurgens's idea," I overheard my wife explaining to someone as we sat down. "He has taken a great fancy to Jack and wanted to do this for him."

I am very far from being a sentimentalist, whatever you may think when you read this, but when I heard this speech I lost all track of my neighbor's conversation for a moment. The crabbed little man with the hoe had seen fit to do this thing for me—to strip his beloved little hothouse and garden for my dinner party! I finished Kathleen's fine soup well content; it was not half so warm as Jurgens had made my heart.

And what a good dinner it was, all the way through! How proud I was of my wife, and how well everyone got on with everyone else!

When we came at last to the coffee, some rascal, no friend of mine, set up a cry of "Speech!" The story of our elopement was common property now, and there had been more or less fun at our expense throughout the dinner; so at this I merely laughed and said nothing. Then they all took up the refrain in a body and I looked down the table helplessly at my wife—for I am far from being even a poor excuse for an after dinner speaker. Even she, however, looked up at me expectantly now, and so, as a good married man should do, I obeyed the silent edict of her eyes and rose to my feet.

Then, as I straightened beside my chair, inspiration for the second time in four brief weeks came to my rescue. "Friends," I heard myself saying in strangely confident tones, "something less than a month ago I made a discovery—a discovery that has grown more wonderful with each succeeding day since then. I will give it to you in the form of a toast. We will drink it all standing, if you please. Here it is:

"Husbands and Wives: May they remain ever young and always Sweethearts and Friends!"

LA PARTIE D'ÉCARTÉ

Par LUCIE DELARUE-MARDRUS

IL est inutile d'expliquer par suite de quel mécanisme du cœur je fréquente avec assiduité une pauvre vieille fille, classiquement ridicule, mais si bonne. . . . Je dis qu'elle est pauvre à cause de son dénuement physique et de son célibat; en réalité, elle vit dans une aisance plutôt riche.

J'étais un soir chez elle, dans sa petite villa d'Auteuil au jardin charmant. Je l'écoutais pleurer sa peine. Elle me confiait comment, la veille, son frère l'avait presque frappée. Il faut dire que la touchante créature a élevé ce frère, beaucoup plus jeune qu'elle, et qu'elle a mis en lui tout le trésor de maternité enseveli dans l'âme féminine. L'histoire de ses dévouements serait longue. Il y a eu, dans la vie de ma vieille amie, des heures ou plutôt des années sublimes. Mais ce n'est pas de cela qu'il s'agit.

— Eric est devenu si irritable, depuis quelque temps, sanglotait-elle dans l'ombre du salon à peine éclairé par une petite lampe.

Elle m'avait pris les mains.

— Figurez-vous, ma chère petite, qu'il m'aurait giflée, hier, si je n'avais reculé brusquement. Et cela parce que je lui disais que c'était une idée vraiment bizarre d'emporter sa valise pour aller peindre sous le pont des Tournelles. Car vous savez qu'il achève son Salon ces jours-ci?

Une lueur de vanité passa dans ses yeux inondés. Puis, elle reprit:

— Je n'ai pas insisté, voyant son humeur. Alors ce matin, dès six heures, il est parti, ayant sa boîte et sa palette dans une main et cette valise dans l'autre. Et voici qu'il va être neuf heures

du soir et qu'il n'est pas encore rentré! Où peut-il être?

Les vieilles joues de la demoiselle ruisselèrent sous une nouvelle averse de chagrin. Moi qui observais depuis plus d'un mois les allures étranges de son frère, ce jeune homme insignifiant, honnête et doux, j'ouvrais la bouche pour lui donner de fausses raisons de se raser, quand la porte, entre-bâillée avec une précaution sournoise, nous laissa entrevoir la silhouette d'Eric, détachée en noir sur le fond illuminé de l'anti-chambre.

A cause du mauvais éclairage, nous ne vîmes pas ses yeux quand il s'approcha de nous. Mais la seule façon dont il avait refermé la porte derrière lui et s'était avancé de notre côté nous avait déjà glacées.

Un instant, le jeune homme parut nous considérer dans le clair-obscur. Puis, avant que nous eussions pu dire un mot, d'un geste saccadé, inattendu, il éteignit la lampe. Nous eûmes un petit cri dans les ténèbres. Le bruit de quelques chaises molestées nous fit lever brusquement. Alors un rire éclata près de nos visages, si diabolique, si détraqué, que nous comprîmes enfin l'abominable chose: Eric était devenu fou.

— Je savais que cela arriverait, murmurait ma vieille amie en claquant des dents dans le noir.

Et c'était une minute horrible, celle où nous nous trouvions ainsi enfermées, en compagnie de ce jeune et solide aliéné, dans cette obscurité dangereuse. Nous comprîmes que, silencieusement, ses mains tâtonnaient, grandes ouvertes, avec le geste qui étrangle. A un moment, je les sentis toutes deux frôler

mes joues de leurs grands dix doigts écartés. Cependant, je ne m'évanouis pas. Rusée et muette, je rampai vers la sonnette électrique. Le timbre résonna follement à travers les autres. La porte du salon se rouvrit. Le valet de chambre, effrayé par cette sonnerie d'alarme, entra en courant.

— De la lumière! . . . râlai-je en continuant à sonner.

En un instant, à la suite du valet, le petit personnel fut dans le salon: la cuisinière, une bougie à la main; la femme de chambre, portant une lampe. Et l'on nous découvrit tous trois dans nos attitudes respectives: la vieille fille ratatinée dans un recoin; moi dans un autre, crispée sur le bouton électrique, et, dans un troisième recoin, le fou. Effrayé par cette invasion, il essayait de se cacher derrière un fauteuil, et ses iris clairs nous dévisageaient l'un après l'autre et paraissaient presque suppliants. Il semblait croire qu'on lui voulait du mal.

A cette vue, sa pauvre sœur se précipita vers lui, et toute son affection sublime était dans son geste et ses yeux.

— Mon enfant chéri! . . . criait-elle en ouvrant ses bras.

Alors le fou se mit à sourire, et l'expression de sa figure médiocre fut si démoniaque, que même les bonnes comprirent ce qu'elle signifiait.

— N'y allez pas, mademoiselle! crièrent-elles ensemble. Il va se jeter sur vous!

Je retins mon amie par sa manche, malgré qu'elle résistât. Elle ne semblait pas avoir compris comme nous. Le fou la suivait du regard, un regard inexorable et patient de bête de proie. De quelles ténébreuses profondeurs humaines cet être banal tirait-il un regard pareil? Nous devinâmes tous que c'était à sa sœur seulement qu'il en voulait.

Hélas! il lui devait tout dans la vie, il l'aimait depuis l'enfance d'un gentil amour filial. . . . Mais les idées fixes des fous sont si souvent le contraire de ce que furent leurs sentiments avant la chute, comme si l'aliénation mentale était en eux une sorte de revanche sata-

nique, une espèce d'envers monstrueux du meilleur d'eux-mêmes.

Un peu plus tard dans la soirée, nous voici installés, le fou et moi, seuls dans le salon, à jouer à l'écarté. Vous nous voyez l'un en face de l'autre devant la table de jeu. Nous sommes un jeune homme et une jeune femme quelconques jouant aux cartes par un soir quelconque. Mais quelle invisible et muette vague d'horreur déferle entre nous deux!

Cette petite comédie terrible est une idée que j'ai eue tout à l'heure, en voyant combien s'aggravait la fureur qui couve dans l'esprit ruiné d'Eric. Le regardant aller de long en large au milieu de nous, se retourner vers sa sœur avec des yeux phosphorescents, crisper les poings ou sourire de son sourire faux, plus menaçant que tout le reste, j'ai pris sur moi de dire à part aux deux bonnes:

— Courez chercher le médecin de la famille; expliquez-lui tout; qu'il amène un aliéniste, des aides. Prévenez aussi les cousins de mademoiselle. . . .

Elles parties, et comme l'agitation du fou croissait encore, j'ai risqué à tout hasard cette phrase, prononcée sur un ton joyeux:

— Dites, Eric, si nous faisons une partie d'écarté? Qu'en pensez-vous?

Eric aime les cartes. Je le sais. Il s'est retourné, m'a regardée, puis, à notre stupeur, il a répondu d'un ton absolument naturel:

— Mais, je ne demande pas mieux, chère madame! C'est une excellente idée!

Pourtant, s'asseyant en face de moi, il a jeté sur sa sœur et le valet de chambre un tel coup d'œil que, prenant héroïquement mon parti de la situation, je leur ai fait signe de quitter la chambre. Ne s'agit-il pas de maintenir le dément en paix jusqu'à l'arrivée du renfort? Ils m'ont comprise et sont sortis sans parler. Je les sais derrière la porte, prêts à se précipiter au moindre cri. Cependant, quel battement de cœur à me sentir toute seule, face à face avec cet être en qui guette l'accès comme un jaguar prêt à bondir!

D'ailleurs, la partie est des plus classiques. Eric, très attentif, choisit longuement sa carte avant de la jeter, surveille mon jeu. J'ai peur de l'irriter par un geste, par un regard. Mon esprit se crispe d'attention. Je tâche que mes mains ne tremblent pas, je tâche d'avoir l'air de ne pas écouter si l'aliéniste arrive, de ne pas avoir l'air de regarder la porte derrière laquelle se trouve le secours en cas de besoin. Sur-tout, j'évite de regarder le visage d'Eric. J'ai peur d'avoir peur de ses yeux et de me mettre à pousser des cris tout à coup, malgré moi. A force de m'absorber, je finis par retrouver la marche de l'écarté, dont je perdais d'abord toute mémoire. Alors je m'aperçois d'une chose extraordinaire: Eric triche.

Il triche, et observe si je le remarque. A la dérobee, je vois ses yeux qui me guettent et son affreux sourire fourbe qui retrousse les coins de sa bouche sous sa moustache blonde. Je tâche de garder mon sang-froid:

— A vous, Eric!

Mais comme, au bout d'un long moment, il n'a pas abattu sa carte, je relève enfin les yeux vers lui et ose le regarder en face.

Derrière l'éventail de ses cinq cartes qu'il tient à deux mains, il a caché le bas de son visage. Ses yeux amusés m'examinent avec une indicible cruauté.

— Jouez! . . . Mais jouez donc! . . . lui crié-je, prise d'une espèce de frénésie.

Rien. Eric continue, caché derrière ses cartes, à me regarder en silence. Puis il fait un geste comme pour se lever. Je vais jeter le cri. Je me retiens. Eric s'est ressisi.

La partie a repris, calme, attentive. Vais-je pouvoir endurer cela une seconde de plus? Mon Dieu! pourquoi ce médecin ne vient-il pas? . . . Et quel silence autour de nous! Tout le monde a-t-il quitté la maison? . . . Suis-je abandonnée avec ce fou dans le salon, en face de cette table? . . .

Cette idée absurde m'est si insupportable que je ne peux la subir plus longtemps. J'ai beau jeter et reprendre ces cartes sur la table, suivre cette partie sinistre, je ne peux m'empêcher de pen-

ser au vide de la villa, au jardin désert qui l'entoure, au quartier isolé qui entoure ce jardin, à la nuit éteinte où les gens dorment, insoucieux des assassinats et des drames qui se passent ailleurs que chez eux. . . . Il faut que je me lève, il faut que je me jette sur la porte et que je la referme derrière moi avant que ce fou. . . .

Eric interrompt ma pensée galopante. A-t-il compris ce qui se passe en moi? Il a laissé retomber ses cartes devant lui. Sa voix siffle vers moi. Il répète, presque bas, lentement:

— Si je voulais, pourtant. . . . Si je voulais. . . .

Et son regard effrayant et doux insiste sur mes yeux.

— Eric, murmuré-je sans savoir ce que je dis, jouez! . . . Vous avez le roi. . . . Vous avez le roi. . . .

— Le roi? fit Eric comme si c'était une révélation.

Et m'écrasant soudain d'un regard magnifique:

— Mais c'est moi, le roi!

Et d'un revers de main si rapide que je n'ai pas eu le temps d'un cri, il s'est levé, a retourné sa chaise et s'est mis à califourchon dessus, avec le mouvement rythmique d'un enfant qui joue au cavalier. Il porte haut la tête. Toute sa personne s'empreint d'un orgueil incommensurable.

— Je suis le roi à cheval, déclare-t-il très haut, avec une emphase extrême.

Et il continue son mouvement puéril. Il est grotesque et terrifiant.

Je me suis levée, renversant les cartes qui s'éparpillent, bigarrure sur le tapis.

— Venez en croupe! ordonne le fou.

Et, soudain, je vois changer son masque versatile et pâle. Ses prunelles se sont allumées. Une lubricité faunesque passe sur son visage. Il se met à me faire un affreux geste, tout en continuant le rythme de la chevauchée. Que va-t-il arriver? Que va-t-il arriver? . . . Vais-je enfin appeler au secours? Vais-je enfin me ruer sur la porte? Mais si je bouge de ma place, si je crie, ne va-t-il pas sauter sur moi? . . .

Une minute passe. Et voici qu'une nouvelle pensée me fait positivement

dresser les cheveux sur le front. S'il se jetait sur moi, s'il me saisissait par le cou, le valet de chambre et ma vieille amie suffiraient-ils pour m'arracher de cette étreinte? Le valet de chambre est grand et vigoureux. Mais la force des fous est connue, et. . .

La porte s'est ouverte. Le médecin ordinaire, l'aliéniste, ma vieille amie, les bonnes, le valet de chambre, les cousins, tout le monde entre à la fois. Dans l'antichambre, je vois les aides qui attendent. Je suis sauvée!

Mais, hélas! à quelle scène atroce allons-nous maintenant assister? Quel va être le départ de ce fou, sa lutte forcée contre les aides, les sanglots de sa sœur?

Nous avons joint les mains d'avance, nous nous mordons les lèvres. Mais l'aliéniste, un grand monsieur correct, froid et barbu, après avoir observé l'attitude d'Eric toujours à cheval sur sa chaise et indifférent à tout ce qui se passe, l'aliéniste s'est approché de lui et l'a salué très bas.

— Excellence, dit-il, la daumont est avancée, nous pouvons partir.

Sans s'étonner une seconde de ce langage et de cet étranger, Eric répond, laconique:

— Bien. Qu'on apporte ma valise.

Sur un signe de l'aliéniste, le valet de chambre est allé chercher la valise.

— Videz-la, dit Eric d'un air froid.

On vide la valise. Eric suit les mouvements du domestique d'un regard de côté, et son mauvais sourire crispe sa bouche.

L'aliéniste s'est rapproché:

— Ouvrez la boîte à couleurs, chuchote-t-il. Ouvrez le kodak, ouvrez la blague à tabac. . .

Devine-t-il donc tout à l'avance, ce médecin des fous? Dans la boîte à couleurs, parmi les brosses, on découvre un couteau à virole; dans le kodak, il y a un rasoir, et, dans la blague à tabac, un petit revolver chargé.

— C'est un réticent, jette le docteur avec négligence. Nous connaissons ça. Il y a quelqu'un qu'il veut tuer, mais il s'en cache.

Nous regardons tous ensemble la vieille demoiselle. Elle semble ne pas vouloir comprendre.

Mais l'aliéniste l'enveloppe d'un regard perspicace et lui dit:

— Nous ne vous le garderons pas longtemps, madame. Confiez-le-nous seulement quelques jours. . .

Et comme, subitement rassurée, presque souriante, elle acquiesce d'un signe de tête, l'aliéniste salue une seconde fois Eric jusqu'à terre, et montrant la porte:

— Majesté . . . fait-il.

Alors, sans demander où il va, glacial et dominateur, Eric passe devant nous comme un monarque devant son peuple, et, suivi du regard confiant, ineffable, de sa sœur, il sort de chez lui pour toujours, allant d'un pas compté vers la voiture cellulaire, le cabanon, la camisole de force, vers la fureur, vers l'horreur, cependant qu'informé sans doute de mon courage, l'aliéniste se retourne vers moi sur le seuil et, désignant la table de jeu, murmure:

— Je vous félicite, madame, vous avez gagné la partie.



POUR UN AUTRE

Par LOUIS LE CARDONNEL

TOI qui rêves d'amour, toi qui rêves de gloire,
Avant que de tenter ces périlleuses mers,
Grave cette sentence au fond de ta mémoire:
Le myrte et le laurier, tous les deux sont amers.

NOVELS AND OTHER BOOKS— CHIEFLY BAD

By H. L. MENCKEN

A NEW novel from the workshop of Mrs. Humphry Ward is a literary event, and the goddess-fearing critic, I believe, is expected to deal with it copiously and enthusiastically. But in the case of "MARRIAGE À LA MODE" (Doubleday-Page, \$1.50) I must ask for a suspension of the league rules. It is a commonplace story, told with so little skill that it descends more than once to positive banality. I find myself utterly unable to hail it as a work of genius, or even as a work of art. It is merely a good average novel.

Mrs. Ward's heroine is an emotional young woman who seems to visualize the author's conception of iconoclastic Young America. Racially, she is a mixture of Latin and Celt, with all the passion of the one and all the chronic delusion of persecution of the other. Left orphaned and rich, she falls in love with an appallingly handsome Englishman of limited intelligence, and by dint of adroit maneuvering, marries him. And then begins the drama.

The Englishman, once safely at home with his wife, renews in a harmless but imprudent fashion an old affair with a distant cousin. Thereupon, the wife, flying into a frenzy of jealousy, accuses him of all the high crimes and misdemeanors on the connubial calendar, and hires spies to watch him. One scrap of circumstantial evidence is enough for her. Grabbing up her child, she is in full flight before her dull Britisher can halt her. Her destination is South Dakota, and the jurisprudence of that enlightened republic soon gives

her freedom. When her husband ventures to oppose her suit she takes an appeal to the yellow journals. All good Americans stand together on her side. The Sassnach is kicked out of the country.

The fair American, naturally enough, lives to rue her indecent haste and more indecent perjury most bitterly, and after her child dies and her ex-husband takes to drink she ventures upon a feeble effort at atonement. But the ex-husband has had enough of America and the Americans. Like Laurence Trenwith, in "Iris," he can only say, "I am sorry." Tears cannot wither nor memories pale his infinite irreconcilability. At the end we see the two part forever, to the somber strains of the retribution *motif*.

It would be absurd, of course, to deny Mrs. Ward's technical facility and general feeling for form and color. She is a craftswoman of long experience and obvious ability, and so she is able to give her characters a certain air of plausibility, no matter how amazing their actual acts. Even her heroine has abundant reality. But there are also touches in the book that suggest the rude, untutored writer of best sellers. Far back, upon page 221, for example, the author introduces a new character whose sole purpose and function it is to hear the tale of all that has happened on pages 218, 219 and 220, which are blank. Such clumsy devices for getting on with the story are inexcusable in a novelist who pretends to the first rank. They remind one,

indeed, of the preposterous soliloquies which opened the sentimental dramas of the '70's.

There are other places, too, where the ingenuity of the author seems to flag. The general effect of the book, indeed, is that of a somewhat tiresome task accomplished without enthusiasm. Bearing some new author's name, it would give a hundred hints of talent yet undeveloped. Bearing Mrs. Ward's, it gives a thousand hints of talent unemployed.

THE latest work of Ellen Glasgow's, "THE ROMANCE OF A PLAIN MAN" (Macmillan, \$1.50), must inevitably invite comparison with Mary Johnston's "Lewis Rand," for both deal with the excessively snobbish aristocracy of Richmond, and each has for its hero a common man who woos and wins a fair daughter of that aristocracy, and then finds, to his sorrow, that even such a feat cannot transform a commoner into a patrician. The comparison of one book with the other need not proceed further. They have little in common save the theme, for Miss Johnston's volume is a work of art, while Miss Glasgow's is not.

The hero of this story is a prodigious scion of Richmond's poor white trash—a boy who senses the subtle difference between "who" and "whom" at the age of five (see page 38, line 12) and who rises, before he is thirty, to the rank and dignity of a captain of finance. In his nonage the little daughter of a proud old Virginia house laughs at him and calls him common; in his manhood he marries her, though without any actual notion of revenge. It is the conflict between the patrician poise and dignity of the wife and the plebeian running amuck of the husband that makes the drama. He is capable of loving her, but he can never quite understand her. He believes at the start that the difference in rank which separates them is a mere convention; that so soon as he learns how to enter a room without falling over the rugs he will be her equal. But, like Lewis Rand, he finds out in the end that it takes more

than a belt to make an earl of a dustman.

The idea at the bottom of Miss Glasgow's story is a good one, and the general plan of it is sound. But more than once the details are incredible. In one place, for example, she shows us the alert and resourceful Ben Starr reduced of a sudden to such abject poverty that his wife is forced to take in washing. That a man of his reputation should have no friends willing, and even eager, to help him in his need seems entirely impossible. To accept the situation we must consider him as a being *in vacuo*. Again, the relatives of Ben, and particularly his brother, are not convincing figures. Miss Glasgow's best portraits, indeed, are those of her aristocratic characters. No doubt this is because the Richmond that she knows best is the Richmond that they people.

"FATE AND THE BUTTERFLY," by Forest Halsey (Dodge, \$1.50), is a first book of uneven texture, which makes up in promise what it lacks in fulfillment. Mr. Halsey writes clear English; his characters often have reality, and he has more than a touch of wit. The faults of his book are deep down in the structure of it: the author lacks the technical skill properly to manage his fable.

The central figure is Bertha De Francis, a little daughter of the rich. Falling in love with Damien Roth, a handsome young devil of a millionaire, she accompanies him to the hymeneal altar and then discovers, when it is too late, that he is an incurable drug fiend. It is the business of the story to show how Bertha's life with her husband, despite her honest efforts to lift him up, inevitably drags her down. She leaves him, eventually, and goes to Europe as the mistress of an old suitor, himself now a grass widower. There a third man comes into her life, and through him, in the end, she finally reaches redemption.

In itself, the self-sacrifice of this third man is not improbable—for no pretty woman, however contaminated,

need long in vain for a respectable husband—but the author fails to prepare for it skillfully. We are not made acquainted with the man; he pops in like Castor and Pollux or the rescuing jack tars of comic opera. We learn nothing about the mental processes behind his acts. We see him only as a deliverer in a cloud, and so he takes away the reality of the story.

"THE LODGER OVERHEAD," by Charles Belmont Davis (*Scribners*, \$1.50), is a book of short stories which nowhere touch greatness and nowhere touch stupidity. They are smoothly written, in an easy, colloquial style; their people are interesting, and the philosophy underlying them is that of a well-fed, middle-aged looker-on. This latter gentleman, indeed, is an actual character in nearly all of them. He is the Van Bibber of Mr. Davis's brother, Richard Harding, grown meditative and paunchy. One feels, from the first, his extreme fashionableness. He goes among the common folk, aiding true love here and honest poverty there, but it is ever as a visitor from a superior planet. Even when, in one story, he marries a poor but proud Southern girl, one suspects that it is not common love, but a sort of delirium of pity, that moves him.

If Mr. Davis is wise he will put this character into a play. The stories called "The Band" and "The Dancing Man" show how admirably he would serve as the hero of a sentimental comedy.

"THE GIPSY COUNT," a medieval romance by May Wynne (*McBride*, \$1.50), is true to type. On page one the solitary horseman of G. P. R. James comes galloping o'er the sky line, and on the last page "her hazel eyes are looking into his, reading the passion in them."

Incidentally, the book breaks the best-seller record by showing questionable diction in its very first word. This word is "westwards," which would convey the same idea without irritating the ear if the final "s" were

omitted. The letter "s" seems to be a favorite among the writers of department-store fiction. They write "besides," "towards," "upwards" and "outwards" whenever the chance offers, and the phrase "a little ways" seems to give many of them delight. The dictionaries say that the use of the "s" is allowable, but offer no arguments. If any gentleman in the house can defend it upon reasonable grounds I shall be glad to hear from him.

Miss Wynne's romance, to return to the business before us, is a conventional tale of love making and heroics. It has action, sentiment, suspense, thrills, eloquence—everything, in short, save that subtle art which separates a good book from a bad one.

"MR. OPP," by Alice Hegan Rice (*Century Co.*, \$1.25), is a worthy companion piece to "Mrs. Wiggs." In it one finds the same whimsical humor, the same skill at drawing eccentric characters and the same touch of sentiment. D. Webster Opp, country editor and dreamer, is the central figure, but there are many others. Opp is a sort of mixture of Mulberry Sellers and the Chevalier Bayard. One chuckles over his bombastic absurdities—and then comes his act of sacrifice, and the chuckle dies. Altogether, a charming little book.

A BOOK of curious interest and no little value is "HAREMLIK," by Demetra Vaka Brown (*Houghton-Mifflin*, \$1.25). Mrs. Brown is a Greek, born in Constantinople, and spent her childhood there, with little Turks of the upper classes as her playmates. In her later youth she came to the United States and, after a while, married an American. Then, having been absent nine years, she returned to old Stamboul and spent several months visiting her friends. Most of the girls were married by now, and some were married to men with other wives. As a result, Mrs. Brown had an excellent chance to study polygamy from within the harem, and from the harem woman's point of view.

Her verdict seems to be that polygamy, at least in Turkey, has much to recommend it. The women are well cared for; there is little disagreement between them, and they appear to be happy. The notion that they are miserable, groveling slaves, who are bought and sold like cattle, is a grotesque fiction of the missionaries. As a matter of fact, practically all of those visited by Mrs. Brown were women of refinement and culture, whose husbands held them in enormous respect. They spoke and read French, German and often English; they were aware of Nietzsche, Marx and Debussy, and they had reached the conclusion, by a purely intellectual route, that Christianity was a mass of platitudes and exploded fallacies. The idea that, in the United States, respectable women had to submit to the bossing and ogling of floorwalkers, stage managers and other libidinous fellows in order to earn a living, filled them with horror. Contemplating our divorce laws, they were almost moved to send out Mohammedan evangelists to our shores to save us from hell.

As for sympathy, the majority of them laughed at it. Were women ripe for sympathy whose husbands loved them and cherished them in sickness and in health? Were women ripe for sympathy upon whom Allah had showered the blessings of sons? Were women to be pitied who had only to say what they wanted and it was theirs—whether a new book, a new frock, another brand of cigarettes, or another slave? The ladies of the harem, laying aside "Zur Genealogie der Moral," made effort, with all the politeness in the world, to rescue Mrs. Brown from her American prejudices and sophistries. They urged her, indeed, to marry some likely Turk, and so settle down to a normal, civilized life. They even offered to ensnare the Turk.

Such books, particularly if they are as well written as the present one, serve a useful purpose. Insidiously, but none the less effectively, they help to undermine our national bigotry.

This bigotry is our besetting sin. It makes us underestimate everything that is exotic—the German army, the French drama, the English business man, the Moslem religion. It leads us to send out callow young fanatics, with bulging Adam's apples and translucent ears, to teach philosophy and morality to peoples who were already suffering from gout before we had reached measles.

FOUR books of a virulent and polemical character come next upon my five-mile shelf of newborn classics. The first is a neat and handy reprint of "THE FABIAN ESSAYS IN SOCIALISM," by George Bernard Shaw, Mrs. Annie Besant, Sir Sydney Olivier and other evangelists of the new order (*Ball Pub. Co.*, 50 cents); the second is poor old Mark Twain's latest quasi-book, "IS SHAKESPEARE DEAD?" (*Harper*, \$1.25); and the other two are Fremont Rider's "ARE THE DEAD ALIVE?" (*Dodge*, \$1.50) and Percy MacKaye's "THE PLAYHOUSE AND THE PLAY" (*Macmillan*, \$1.25). It is the purpose of Shaw and his crowd to prove that Socialism, if given a fair chance, would make human existence one grand, sweet song; it is the purpose of Mark Twain to prove that the plays of Shakespeare were not written by Shakespeare, but by some hypothetical person who may be designated by *x*; it is the purpose of Mr. Rider, obscured by many vain protestations of neutrality, to prove that spooks are as real as tax bills; and it is the purpose of Mr. MacKaye to prove that the American drama is fast going to the devil, and that only the bullion of some philanthropic millionaire can save it. It may be said, in brief, before we go further, that all and several of these proofs fail to convince, and that all and several of these purposes fail to be achieved.

Mr. Rider's book is a massive, illustrated summing-up of the "evidence" gathered during the past half-century by the principal necromancers of Europe and America. He has rounded up every professor, theologian, astrono-

mer and yellow journalist in the synagogue, and he has reduced their wild fictions and rhapsodies to clear, simple English. He has presented his case with admirable judgment and enthusiasm, and his book, as a book, is one of the best that spook chasing has to its credit in the language. But for all its workmanlike graces, it is still a mere compendium of stale thrillers. The psychic researchers labor day and night, and scour the visible and invisible worlds for fresh banshees and new proofs that death is a joke, but Sir William Crookes's account of his encounters with Katie King, back in the '80's, remains at once the most convincing and the most incredible affidavit that they have yet put in evidence.

Mr. Rider, like every other historian of the black art, is vastly impressed by the learned degrees borne by some of its professors. Because Dr. Hyslop once taught logic to rah-rah boys, he assumes that Hyslop is a great logician—which I doubt. Because the Italian "scientists" who were bamboozled by that queen of frauds, Eusapia Paladino, were all doctors or professors, he assumes that they were also intelligent men—which by no means follows. And because Sir William Crookes gave the world the X-rays, he assumes that Crookes has X-ray eyes which see through all human chicanery instantly and infallibly. He even lays down the ludicrous proposition that "all but one or two" of the world's chief scientists believe in spirits. Has he never heard of old Dr. Ernst Haeckel, or of Ehrlich, Metchnikoff, Weismann, Le Dantec, Lankester, Wright, Welch, Koch and Flexner?

Crookes's story of Katie King is familiar to all students of hallucination. He says that Katie was a spirit materialized in his house by a medium named Cook. Miss Cook, he asks us to believe, produced Katie out of the empty air, and not only Katie, but also Katie's clothes—her "rat," her belt buckle, the very talcum on her nose. Crookes held Katie's hand, felt her pulse, took her temperature and sound-

ed her lungs. She was, he gravely announces, a perfect imitation of a rather agreeable young woman. But that she actually *was* a young woman—sneaked into his house, let us say, by the fair Miss Cook—he vigorously denies. Her heartbeat was the heartbeat of a ghost. The talcum on her nose was unearthly.

This story is the one best bet of the psychical researchers. They can produce nothing else even remotely approaching it in wonder, authenticity and splendor, for Crookes, who stands for it, is their Huxley. If it is true, their case is won without further testimony being taken. But if it is not true, the greatest man in their camp—the stalwart upon whose academic coruscations and gigantic intellect their case hangs—is an absurd ass. Read Mr. Rider's very readable book and decide for yourself.

MARK TWAIN's argument that Shakespeare did not write the Shakespearean plays is based upon the fact that little authentic information about the Bard has come down to us. If Shakespeare had really done the work himself, says Mark, instead of merely lending his name to some other man, his contemporaries would have recognized him as a great man, and would have been at pains to seek him out, talk to him and leave records of his acts and opinions. As it is, we have only a few facts about his parentage and a few obscure entries in the court papers of Stratford and London.

Assuming that this statement of the historical material at hand is correct—which it is not—the fallacy of the author's reasoning must yet be plain. All that he proves, indeed, is that the majority of Shakespeare's contemporaries were densely blind to his enormous genius. They regarded him, perhaps, as a successful theatrical manager and an ingenious maker of stage plays, but that he was a world figure and one with Æschylus and Solomon never occurred to them. If it had, they would have sought him out; and if it had appeared that he was not the real author of the plays he

claimed, they would have sought out that real author. In a word, the absence of contemporary news of Shakespeare proves only the absence of contemporary appreciation.

Those friends of the poet who were capable of formulating some notion of his true stature—such men as Johnson, Heminge and Condell—were in no doubt as to his reality and honesty. Their testimony is direct and specific; they say that he wrote the plays credited to him. And it is certainly safe to suppose that they knew, for they met him almost daily. They saw the prompt books of his theater, with his autograph corrections; they were his intimates; they paid tribute to him when he died. That the testimony of these men is to be rebutted by the fact that the tradesmen of Stratford did not recognize the Immortal in their midst is an absurdity.

Mr. Clemens's book, indeed, makes sorry reading for those who hold him in reverence. He is, by great odds, the most noble figure America has ever given to English literature. Having him, we may hold up our heads when Spaniards boast of Cervantes and Frenchmen of Molière. His one book, "Huckleberry Finn," is worth, I believe, the complete works of Poe, Hawthorne, Cooper, Holmes, Howells and James, with the entire literary output to date of Indiana, Pennsylvania and all the States south of the Potomac thrown in as makeweight. But since "Following the Equator," his decline has been almost pathetic. Once a great artist, he is now merely a public character. He has gone the road of Wycherley: the old humanity and insight have given place to the smartness of the town wit. Let us try to forget this latter-day Mark Twain, with his pot boilers and his wheezes, and remember only the incomparable Mark Twain that was—and will be through the ages—just as we try to forget that the Thackeray who wrote "Barry Lyndon" also wrote "Lovell the Widower," and that the Shakespeare who wrote "Much Ado About Nothing" wrote also "Cymbeline."

In the case of young Mr. MacKaye the same sort of charity is demanded. The author is our foremost living dramatic poet, and we must never cease to be grateful to him for his exquisite unacted comedy of "The Canterbury Pilgrims." He has got the true spirit of old Dan Chaucer into it; it bubbles over with the joy of life. But a writer of dramas is not always a good dramatic critic. Henry Arthur Jones gave us proof of that when he printed "The Renascence of the English Drama." There is abundant additional proof—and it is well rubbed in—in Mr. MacKaye's "THE PLAYHOUSE AND THE PLAY."

The book is made up, in the main, of addresses delivered before various universities, and all of them urge the establishment of an endowed theater. I have not space enough to consider Mr. MacKaye's arguments in detail, and few of them, indeed, are worth the trouble. They are, with almost no exception, ponderously sophomoric and unconvincing. They read like the solemn banalities of a college professor. They are unsound in premise and ridiculous in conclusion. Obvious facts are announced with a quite comic air of profundity, and after announcing them and rolling them, as it were, on his tongue for a space, the author proceeds to make them fit his theories. His style, in its elephantine vacuity, mirrors his logic. It gives the finishing touch of bombast to the book.

Let Mr. MacKaye return to his play making. We stand in need of the excellent plays he knows how to write, but we can well spare his dramatic criticism. Were it not that I have respect for the well-earned preëminence of the venerable William Winter, I should call him the most vapid, platitudinous and tiresome dramatic critic that the Anglo-Saxon race has yet produced.

"THE FABIAN ESSAYS IN SOCIALISM" is the most ingenious and entertaining of all Socialist text-books. Here we have a tract written, not by beery walking delegates and profession-

al agitators, but by men and women of education, humor, resourcefulness, plausibility and literary skill. The introductory essay by George Bernard Shaw is alone worth the price of admission. In all the two hundred or more pages there is scarcely a dull line. But that the book will make a Socialist of you, unless you are already infected by the loathsome *bacilli*, I gravely doubt. It will convince you, you may be sure, that Socialism would make a lot of people happy, but it will also impress upon you that Socialism would heap its richest benefits, not upon the most valuable men, but upon those men whose right to life and liberty is contested today by the constable, the turnkey, the hangman and the vigilance committee.

FROM the press of L. C. Page & Co. come four unconventional and attractive books of travel. Two of them deal with Italy, one with Egypt and one with Wales. They are all models of artistic book making, and all four have many illustrations.

The most pretentious of the quartet is Mrs. Caroline Atwater Mason's "THE SPELL OF ITALY." Here we have, not a guide book, but a record of the impressions of an alert and sympathetic traveler. Mrs. Mason sees beyond the mere monuments and show places of the Peninsula, and she has skill enough to make her discoveries interesting and delightful. Not the least valuable feature of her book is its frequent discussion of other books of and about the country, both from native and from foreign pens. Altogether, her chapters must inevitably add much to the enjoyment of an American visiting Italy for the first time.

A GOOD companion volume is "ITALIAN HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS FROM A MOTOR CAR," by that indefatigable wanderer, Francis Miltoun. Mr. Miltoun is chiefly concerned with the very practical matters of road metal, grade and hotel accommodation, but he pauses often to point out a beautiful prospect or a tumbling ruin. He is ready with

curious lore about the old Roman highways, and he has suggestions for all sorts of tours, long and short. A number of maps and diagrams help to make the way plain, and there are many artistic drawings in color and black and white.

WHAT Mr. Miltoun does for Italy, Mrs. Rodolph Stawell does for Wales in "MOTOR TOURS IN WALES AND THE BORDER COUNTIES." Mrs. Stawell's directions to the motorist are simple and specific. She knows the principal-ity thoroughly, from Carnarvon to Cardiff, and her book is an agreeable combination of guide book, road map and history. Even though one may harbor neither hope nor intention of touring Wales in a devil wagon, the pages slip by most agreeably.

THE volume on Egypt is "FROM CAIRO TO THE CATARACT," by Blanche M. Carson. As a matter of fact, the author begins her story with her departure from New York, and there are stops at Paris and in Italy before she begins the slow journey by steamer up the grandfather of navigable streams. It is a journey broken by frequent stops and by a host of amusing incidents and encounters. One meets tourists of a multitude of nationalities, and one sees them all in the grasp of the avaricious *fellaheen*. And at the end there is an excellent brief summary of Egypt's endless history, and a list of the multitude of Egyptian kings. Fifty full-page illustrations really illustrate the text.

A BOOK of numerous merits is Mrs. Theodosia Garrison's new collection of verse, "THE JOY OF LIFE" (Kennerley, \$1.00). As the title indicates, Mrs. Garrison's philosophy is that which must inevitably mark the true lyric poet. Unless one acquiesces in life, song is impossible. Its very existence presupposes a delight in the very fact of existence. This delight one discovers in even the least gay of the author's stanzas; hers, indeed, is a Tudor vision, alert to every bird call and patch of green. Nothing more nearly perfect

than her "Petition of Idleness" has appeared in America since Robert Loveman's early songs. And Loveman is her superior only on occasion. Considering the general average of her work—and what an indefatigable worker she is!—she has no superior among us.

SOCIALISM VS. CHRISTIANITY—
by Edward R. Hartman.

(*Cochrane*, \$1.50)

An elaborate attempt to prove that the Socialists are heretics. Inasmuch as the majority of them admit it and are proud of it, the utility of Mr. Hartman's labor appears obscure.

THE RING AND THE MAN—
by Cyrus Townsend Brady.

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A story of love and politics, told in Mr. Brady's facile manner. It throws no new light upon the problems of existence, but it has abundant movement.

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THE MYSTERY OF MISS MOTTE—

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THE HAWK—

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THE WOMAN IN QUESTION—

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A GENTLEMAN OF QUALITY—

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THE RULE OF THREE—

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(*Small-Maynard*, \$1.25)

A sprightly little comic opera without music. A young man, urged to reluctant matrimony by a rich aunt, induces a girl to pose as his wife—and then, of course, falls in love with her.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR—

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A mildly diverting tale of adventure, with the scene laid in early San Francisco, and a fiery Latin flavor in some of the characters.

MERELY PLAYERS—

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A collection of short stories about stage folks. Insight and color are in the worst of them, and the best, "In August," is excellent.

THE STORY OF THE GREAT LAKES—
by Edward Channing and M. F. Lansing.

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NORA CONOUGH—

by W. G. Henderson.

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THE CITY OF SPLENDID NIGHT—

by John W. Harding.

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A story obviously designed to be "powerful." If the author had a sense of humor he would strain for effects less comically.

KINGSMEAD—

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Chalmers-Detroit "30"
1910 Model—\$1500

The Chalmers-Detroit "30," 1910 Model, has a 115-inch wheel base. That's three inches longer than our "Forty" of last season. It has 34-inch wheels, against 32-inch last season. Tonneau is more roomy and stylish, the hood accordingly longer and higher.

To the 800

Our 1910 Models

This amazing "30," with all the lines of the most costly cars—showy, roomy, long and luxurious—sells again this season for \$1500

On May 12—right at the season's height—the last Chalmers-Detroit "30" of the 1909 model was sold. Since then we have turned away orders for more than 800 cars. Think of unfulfilled orders for \$1,200,000 in the first season of the "30."

Our dealers now have our 1910 models on show. We fixed deliveries to begin early in August, so you who were disappointed on the 1909 models can get the new ones in the season's infancy. Get your orders in now with your dealer.

Larger Cars—Same Price

For 1910, we are going to give you even more than before for the money.

Our new Chalmers-Detroit "30"—our \$1500 car—will have a 115-inch wheel base. That's three inches longer than our 1909 "Forty." It will have 34-inch wheels, two inches larger than last season.

The hood will be three inches longer and two inches higher—in keeping with the larger body. The tonneau will be large and roomy. And not a car on the market, regardless of price, will have a more stylish body.

Our 1910 "Forty" will have a 122-inch wheel base—ten inches longer than last season. It will have 36-inch wheels, and room for seven passengers. Our 1909 "Forty" was a five-passenger car. Our new "Forty" will be upholstered in hand-buffed leather, and a Bosch magneto will be furnished free.

Yet, with all these costly improvements, not a penny is added to the price of either car.

How We Have Done It

Cost of materials has advanced \$75 to \$100 per car. But we have more than offset this extra cost. We have doubled our factory and increased our capacity by 1,000 cars, which will be produced without a dollar's extra cost for management, for advertising or supervision.

Last year our fixed expense on the "30" was divided by 2,500 cars. This year the same expense is divided by 3,500 cars. That makes a considerable difference per car.

Then our cars are not altered in mechanical ways. This year increasing the bore of our cylinders to four inches and making slight changes in the exhaust valves gives us more power, but we still rate the motor at 30 h. p. In the other vital features, there's no possible room for improvement.

So the same tools and machinery will serve for another year. The expense of last season doesn't need to be repeated. Thus we save a great deal. You benefit.

Nine Per Cent Profit Still

Our profit for 1909 was approximately 9 per cent. Our profit for 1910 we figure will be about the same. Every cent that we save by increasing our output will go into size, finish and style.

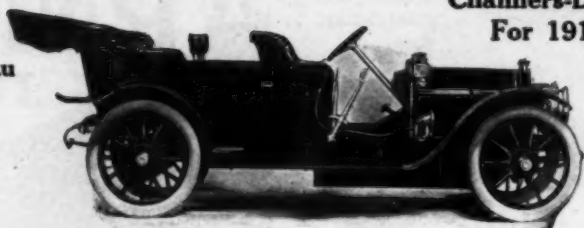
In other words, we offset the increased cost by an increased output. That is our permanent policy. Chalmers-Detroit cars will always give the most for the money.

They will always give you every penny's worth

Chalmers-Detroit Motor Company,

Touring Car
Pony Tonneau
Roadster

Chalmers-Detroit "Forty"
For 1910—\$2,750



The Chalmers-Detroit "Forty," 1910 Model, has a 122-inch wheel base. Ten inches longer than last season. It has 36-inch wheels, two inches larger than last season. It has seats for seven passengers. Upholstered in hand-buffed leather. Magneto free.

Disappointed

Are Now On Show

Note the 1910 "Forty"—a seven-passenger car. Ten inches longer than before—has two inches larger wheels. Yet the price remains \$2,750

of value it is possible to give and retain what would be considered fair profit in any business.

Extras at Low Cost

Here is an additional policy adopted for 1910; that is, to furnish the following extras at the lowest possible cost—much cheaper than you could possibly buy them unless you bought them from us.

We will fit our \$1500 car with a Bosch magneto, a Prest-O-Lite gas tank, and two of the Atwood-Castle new style gas lamps, all for \$100 extra. The cost of these extras at regular prices would be \$175.

We will furnish our "30" with a Lenox mohair top for \$75 extra. This is the very best top you can buy. Don't be satisfied with the ordinary top when you can get a mohair top from us for \$75. The regular price of this top is \$125.

On our "Forty" the Bosch magneto, the gas lamps and gas tank are all included in the price of \$2,750. But we will supply with our "Forty" a \$150 Newport mohair top for \$125 extra, and we will supply two extra seats—usual price \$75—for \$50 extra.

The Records of 1909

The Chalmers-Detroit "30" was a new car only a year ago. One could judge it only by the splendid record of the Chalmers-Detroit "Forty."

Its main prestige lay in the fact that Mr. Coffin designed it—the man who designed our "Forty." But \$1500 was a new price—an amazing price. And all the world wondered what sort of car it would buy. Now the records are in.

One of our "30's" has been run more than 32,000 miles, including a path-finding trip from Denver to Mexico City. Never has any car at any price made an equal endurance record. Another "30" won first at Crown Point, Ind.

Owners have paid us for repair parts on all cars shipped during year just passed, exactly \$2.44 per car. We believe that's another world's record.

In the Economy Test, made in New York by the New York Auto Dealers' Association, our "30" made 25.7 miles on a gallon of gasoline. On a long distance road race its average speed was 50.2 miles per hour.

Never did a car prove more satisfactory. Never did a car cost so little for upkeep. Mr. Coffin has devoted another year to its study. Yet he has found no mechanical way to improve it.

Send for New Catalog

Most men find in the Chalmers-Detroit "30" all they want in a car. No price can buy more than we give in our "Forty," save unneeded power.

Send today for a catalog. Make your comparisons. Get your order in early to insure prompt delivery. If you buy early you have four or five months' use of the car when the weather is best for motoring, before the car's calendar year really begins. Cut out this coupon now.

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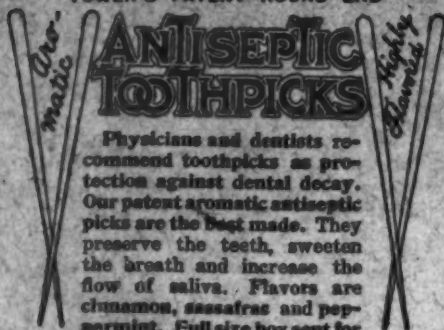
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